

HOW TO READ THE SAINTS

A POETICS OF EXEMPLARITY IN SULPICIUS SEVERUS' *GALLUS*

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How to Read the Saints: A Poetics of Exemplarity in Sulpicius Severus' *Gallus*

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This dissertation argues that, in his writings on Martin, Sulpicius Severus constructs for his audience an ideal reader of hagiography, whose depiction allows him to condition the eventual reception of the text. Past scholarship on this corpus has focused especially on questions of historicity, in an attempt to understand more fully the figure of Martin in the context of a late ancient Gaul riven by ecclesiastical conflict. Instead of seeing Sulpicius' writing simply as a conduit to Martin, this project shifts scholarly focus from the holy man to his hagiographer. The dissertation's first chapter addresses the narrative structure of Sulpicius' writings on Martin, which include the original *Life*, three letters and the dialogue, *Gallus*. The second and third chapters account for Sulpicius' experimentation across diverse ancient genres: biography, epistolography and dialogue and argue that this formal progression allows Sulpicius to foreground the figure of the reader in the corpus. The chapters demonstrate that readers as depicted in the dialogue are marked as exemplary for Sulpicius' external audience: they model how to read a saint. The fourth chapter examines the content of that program of reading, in particular the frequent use of *exempla* in the dialogue, suggesting that Sulpicius uses these episodes to fashion a link that correlates the writing and reading of hagiography to the performance of saintly *virtus*.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Zachary Yuzwa received his Ph.D. in Medieval Studies from Cornell University in 2014. He received an M.A. in Medieval Studies from Cornell in 2010 and an M.A. in Classics from the University of Alberta in 2005. He received a B.A. (Honours) in Classical Languages with First Class Honours from the University of Alberta in 2004. He is husband to Jane and father to Hannah.

For Jane, of course.

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Introduction

A LITERARY APPROACH TO SULPICIOUS SEVERUS' MARTINIAN CORPUS

The subject of this dissertation is not Martin of Tours. I begin not with that holy man cutting his cloak and clothing a naked beggar outside the gates at Amiens, not with him casting down temples, not with him resurrecting the dead. Instead, I begin with the man who “burned to record the life of the saint”¹ and in whose writings—so said Paulinus of Nola—“Martin was fully alive.”² Indeed, the holy man lives now only in those texts of Sulpicius Severus which depict his life, his death, his miracles and virtues. Even for Paulinus, a friend and contemporary to Sulpicius and a man whose reputation Martin himself knew, it was these texts alone that made Martin present. And though Sulpicius protested the very possibility, it is nearly the case that “everything to be learned about Martin has become known with him alone doing the writing.”³

This author has left an impressive corpus of texts devoted particularly to Martin, fourth century bishop of Tours. They comprise a *Life*, three subsequent letters and a dialogue called the

¹ *Vita Martini* 25.1, “quia iam ardebat animus uitam illius scribere.” The standard modern edition is Jacques Fontaine, ed., *Sulpice Sévère, Vie de saint Martin*, 3 vols. (Paris: Éditions du Cerfs, 1967-1969). Hereafter, I abbreviate the *uita* as *VM*. Fontaine's edition of the *Life* also includes Sulpicius' three letters on the death of Martin, hereafter = *ep.* 1, *ep.* 2 and *ep.* 3. Fontaine has also produced the standard edition of Sulpicius' final Martinian text, the *Gallus*, which is in fact the primary focus of this study. Jacques Fontaine, ed., *Gallus: Dialogues sur les "vertus" de saint Martin* (Paris: Éditions du Cerfs, 2006), hereafter = *G*. Translations are my own, but I have at times consulted Alexander Roberts' translation in Phillip Schaff, ed., *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* II, Volume XI (Edinburgh: Clark, 1894).

² Paulinus, *ep.* 27.3, “totum in te spirare Martinum.”

³ Sulpicius, *ep.* 3. 4, “aut ego tanto sim operi destinatus ut omnia, quae de Martino cognosci oportet, me potissimum scribente notescant.”

Gallus.⁴ In this dissertation, I suggest first of all that we might better understand that corpus by shifting our scholarly focus from the holy man to his biographer. That is to say, I suggest that we might read these texts not solely to uncover some evidence about Martin and his function in the world of late ancient Gaul, important though such a project may be. Instead, I argue that they are the product of an innovative and inventive author whose literary project has been left relatively unexamined in the consistent attempts to treat the corpus as a source—whether reliable or not—for historical or biographical data. The texts, concerned though they are with the perceived authenticity of their content,⁵ evince a poetics more nuanced than simple representation (as if such were possible). We might even say that the corpus is self-consciously literary. By this I mean not just that the *Life*, letters and dialogue are pleasing in their way or otherwise rhetorically sophisticated. This is certainly so. However, when I describe the Martinian corpus as literary, I am suggesting that Sulpicius regularly foregrounds the task of the author and the expected role of his reader. The texts evince a self-consciousness about their own production and reception. Sulpicius explicitly situates his work in a practice of writing that depends on earlier models, as diverse as Plato and the *Acts of the Apostles*, Cicero and Athanasius of Alexandria. He structures his corpus—across multiple volumes and multiple genres—in a novel manner, one that merits some explanation for its own sake.

⁴ On their relative chronology and order in the subsequent manuscript tradition, see below Chapter I, 30-37.

⁵ *cf.* *VM* 27.6-7, “De cetero, si qui haec infideliter legerit, ipse peccabit. Ego mihi conscius sum me, rerum fide et amore Christi impulsum ut scriberem, manifesta exposuisse, uera dixisse; paratumeque, ut spero, habebit a Deo praemium, non quicumque legerit, sed quicumque crediderit.” Another example is the beginning of Gallus' speech at *G* 1.27.8, “Nec uero audito ab aliis quam quae uidi ipse dicturus sum.” See also my discussion below of scholarly treatments of this “rhetoric of authenticity”, pp. 15-18.

At the same time, it is not quite right to say that Sulpicius himself is our focus. We know very little of his life, with his personal correspondence lost and his extant writings scant on intimate details. What we do know comes especially from those many letters of Paulinus addressed to Sulpicius.⁶ He is somewhat younger than his frequent correspondent, born perhaps around 355.⁷ We might conclude from a passing reference in a commentary of Jerome that he was still alive around 410.⁸ Gennadius' *De uiris illustribus*, written in the late fifth century, suggests that Sulpicius in fact survived into the 420s, long enough to be affected by the semi-Pelagian controversy that swept the south of Gaul around this time.⁹ We have no firm date for his death, however. In the end, this is no matter: when I ask us to turn our focus from Martin to his biographer, really I ask us to attend to the literary and rhetorical choices Sulpicius makes. I am suggesting that we attend to the development of the corpus from one work to the next; that we ask questions of narrative structure and questions of genre; that we identify intertexts, allusions and explicit models; ultimately, I am suggesting that we parse the rhetorical strategies that these texts transact in their depiction of Martin. What does it mean to write and to read about a holy man?

Sulpicius himself encourages us in such an approach by his constant recourse to self-reflexive commentary on the process of writing. The *Life* begins and ends not with Martin, but

⁶ Paulinus addresses thirteen letters to Sulpicius: *Epp.* 1, 5, 11, 17, 22-24, 27-32. The standard treatment of the dating of Paulinus' letters remains P. Fabre, *Essai sur la Chronologie de l'oeuvre de Saint Paulin de Nole* (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1948). Dennis Trout's more recent treatment of Paulinus' dates did not reorder Fabre's basic chronology; cf. Trout, *Paulinus of Nola: Life, Letters, Poems* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 212.

⁷ Paulinus, *ep.* 5.4-5.

⁸ Jerome, *Comm. in Hiezechielem* 1.15, "et nuper Seuerus noster in dialogu cui "Gallo" nomen imposuit".

⁹ Gennadius, *De vir. ill.* 19.

with discussions of style, discussions of Sulpicius' aims, his audience and his potential reception. That text is in many ways a self-conscious reflection on what it means to write the *Life* of a holy man. In the rest of the corpus, this tendency is perhaps even more explicitly marked. In the three letters that follow the *Life*, Sulpicius regularly comments on the context of his writing and the difficulties of accomplishing his purpose.¹⁰ In the *Gallus*, he ascribes the very same sort of concerns to those interlocutors who recount narratives about the virtues of Martin and other holy men.¹¹

In my dissertation, I investigate this overriding concern for literary practice, asking how exactly Sulpicius imagines an ideal practice of writing and reading about holy men. I suggest that a close reading of the *Gallus* will compel us to understand Sulpicius' entire Martinian corpus on different terms. Rather than imagining a central *Life* supplemented by a series of letters and a dialogue that are essentially peripheral, we will come to realize that the *Life*, letters and dialogue construct a literary trajectory in which depictions of the holy man develop alongside progressively more nuanced representations of the role of author and reader in the reception of Martin's life. Focusing most closely on the *Gallus*, I show that this literary dialogue participates in an exemplary discourse which reconceives the relationship between an author, his audience and his saintly subject: Sulpicius fashions a link which correlates writing and reading to the performance of virtue. Indeed, I suggest that careful attention to the *Gallus* will help us to describe a literary ethics which locates religious—and particularly ascetic—practice in the production and consumption of literature. I delineate a poetics in the *Gallus* which represents the

¹⁰ Most remarkable is the episode which begins the third letter, *ep.* 3.1-4; on this, see below Chapter II, 86-90. The beginnings of the other two letters likewise address writerly concerns; *cf.* *ep.* 1.1 and 2.1-2.

¹¹ *cf.* esp. *G* 1.27.4-5.

author and his readers as participants—by a series of exemplary impulses—in the *uirtus* of the holy man.

Scholars have recently noted in the Christian literature of late antiquity an apparent intersection of literary performance and ascetic practice. Derek Krueger, for example, has shown how the authors of the earliest Greek *Lives* of holy men depict their writing as an ascetic performance.¹² He explains how the “ritualizations” of hagiographic composition constitute a form of asceticism, focusing especially on the function of humility in the practice of late ancient Christian authorship.¹³ “By ritualizing acts of composition as acts of humility and using writing to cultivate virtue, hagiographers constructed a Christian theology of literary composition, an ascetical poetics, and established the place of literary production in ascetic formation.”¹⁴ In Sulpicius’ Martinian corpus, however, humility does not so much accomplish the “displacement of authorship” as Krueger describes in later Byzantine hagiography.¹⁵ Rather, the concerns which attach to writing—as Sulpicius renders them—serve instead to underscore the role of the biographer in the corpus. The task of the author is a persistent feature of Sulpicius’ oeuvre, and such discussions do not simply crowd in the prefaces (though of course they are especially present there). Sulpicius, like the later authors Krueger describes, sets a heavy emphasis on the

¹² Krueger, *Writing and Holiness* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004). Similarly, Catherine Chin, in her *Grammar and Christianity in the Late Roman World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), has considered the *artes grammaticae* of Latin late antiquity, showing how the “conventions of the discipline of grammar transformed linguistic work into incipient religious practice” (4).

¹³ Krueger, 108.

¹⁴ *ibid.*, 109.

¹⁵ *ibid.*, 102.

“longed-for humility” of his writing,¹⁶ but he does so in such a way that asserts rather than displaces the role of the author. We might even say he does so in such a way that suggests some recognition of this inevitable opposition. For, when in the *Gallus* an interlocutor takes up the trope of humble authorship in a *captatio benevolentiae* which precedes his account of Martin’s *uirtus*, he is accused of being an orator of the craftiest sort: “but since you are a orator, you craftily ask us—like the skilled orator you are—to excuse your lack of skill, because in fact you are overflowing with eloquence.”¹⁷ Krueger’s “longed-for humility” is present: the interlocutor Gallus has just declared that he will “despise the vain trappings of speech and ornaments of words.”¹⁸ This humility, however, is written explicitly as a literary flourish. Gallus asserts his humility. Postumianus’ response shows how that assertion draws attention to one’s eloquence.

With this in mind, it should be less surprising to see how the corpus in turn foregrounds an ideal reader by assimilating him not primarily to the holy man—whose *uirtus* is to some extent unattainable—but to the author himself. Sulpicius evinces a particular concern for the figure of the reader in his text: he explicitly writes his audience into the corpus and even demonstrates how a reader might himself come to write holiness. The holy man is no doubt held up as an example to be imitated, but to the extent that any such imitation is effected in the text, it is invariably accomplished through a mechanism which emphasizes the dual role of the writer and his reader, which emphasizes in fact the means by which the audience might replace the author. The author who recounts a holy man’s *uirtus* is thereby able to participate in his sanctity, is afforded the possibility of salvation. For the reader who would accomplish the same for

¹⁶ *ibid.*, 98.

¹⁷ *G* 1.27.4, “ceterum cum sis scholasticus, hoc ipsum quasi scholasticus artificiose facis, ut excuses inperitiam, quia exuberans eloquentia.”

¹⁸ *G* 1.27.3, “inanes sermonum faleras et uerborum ornamenta contemnere.”

himself, identification with the author is a logical pursuit. It is here especially that I mark out in Sulpicius' Martinian corpus a rhetorical tendency somewhat different from those adduced by Krueger in the later Greek *Lives*. Krueger rightly suggests that "[h]agiography's purpose was to communicate virtues to an audience through narrative."¹⁹

What I argue is that, for Sulpicius, those virtues are communicated to the reader as much in the person of the author as in the holy man. Martin remains the focus, but Sulpicius himself demonstrates for the reader how his literary relationship to the holy man affords him the possibility of salvation. Sulpicius then writes a reader into his text who is himself able to take on such a role. This is one rhetorical move which makes Sulpicius' own poetics of imitation so remarkable. We can find saint-directed imitation throughout the breadth of late ancient Christian literature; here Sulpicius invites us to subtly shift that imitation towards the author.

As I have said, the foregrounding of a saint's exemplary qualities is essential to the entire corpus of biographical literature in late antiquity (whether Christian or not).²⁰ Sulpicius is not unique in this respect. What is unique about his work is the extent to which the literary form of his corpus seems to be conditioned by a rhetoric of exemplarity. The formal progression—from

¹⁹ Krueger, 109.

²⁰ It is so pervasive a feature of ancient literature that its internal workings regularly merit only cursory acknowledgment. However, Michael Williams, *Authorised Lives in Early Christian Biography: Between Eusebius and Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) has recently given an excellent account of Christian biography in late antiquity, addressing the place of imitation in these texts especially in terms of biblical typology, 9-16. His chapter on Antony and Jerome, 101-47, is perceptive of the imitative impulses so prevalent in early Christian biography, though Williams never makes the concept a focus of his study. This work, together with Peter Brown, "The Saint as Exemplar in Late Antiquity," *Representations* 2 (1983): 1-25, represents the more thoroughgoing treatments of imitation and exemplarity in late ancient biography. Other authors acknowledge the importance of the concept but rarely explore it at any length. See more below, Chapter IV, 129 n.10.

life to letters to dialogue—acts in concert with a progressively more explicit exemplary discourse, one directed at and subsequently enacted by an audience internal to Sulpicius' work.

I furthermore suggest that this discourse is grounded as much in the literary productions of traditional Roman authors as it is in early Christian literature. The rhetorical works of Cicero, the historiography of Livy, the moral philosophy of Seneca all construct a discourse that takes seriously the function of literary *exempla* as a guide to ethical conduct. Though Sulpicius' *exempla*--relying as they do on scriptural figures--differ from these authors in content, they share in their method a number of common assumptions. In fact, recent scholarship has reminded us that we must be careful not to distinguish too starkly what is Roman and what is Christian in the late ancient world. This is not a dissertation about the social construction of identity, but it is worth remembering that in the world of late antiquity such categories as Roman and Christian regularly interact and overlap in an constant process of revision and redefinition. It is hardly revelatory to suggest that Sulpicius is both typically Roman and undeniably Christian. I point this out only to re-affirm the assumption that Sulpicius is equally likely to find models for literary production in the work of Cicero and Seneca as he is in texts traditionally included in the canon of early Christian literature. That this dissertation focuses more on the relationship of Sulpicius to Cicero than to authors of Christian martyrological literature is a function of my particular interest in issues of structure and genre. Though the content of Sulpicius' exemplary discourse in the *Gallus* makes persistent use of explicitly Christian figures, I would argue that the formal features of the text evince a dependence on "classical" models.

I therefore suggest that, if we take Krueger's argument seriously (and we should), if writing can be understood as a means of accomplishing asceticism, then the fruits of such literary-ascetic practice merit more careful examination on their own (i.e. literary) terms. The

simple point here is that we should read Sulpicius not just to understand Martin, but also to understand the manner in which Martin is presented to the reader. Even if Sulpicius' works regularly make truth-claims about their content,²¹ and even if their genres are rooted in a quasi-historical discourse,²² we would be wrong to mine these sources only or even especially for their historical or religious content. This is particularly true for an ascetic author who writes his own literary productions so conspicuously into his text. We must read these texts also for their literary qualities, for the rhetorical choices Sulpicius makes in his composition. The benefit in taking such a literary stance toward a corpus more often read for its historical or religious content should become clear: in so doing, we begin to discern the essential role that an author and his audience assume in that crucial intellectual development of the fourth century, namely the proliferation of ascetic literature, thought and practice.

What such a project as mine presupposes, then, is that the literary character of these texts is important in its own right and can moreover be one means of better understanding the problems which have so motivated past scholarship. To say *problems*—in the plural—is something of an exaggeration, however. Since E.-Ch. Babut inaugurated the modern study of this corpus in 1912, the motivating concern of contemporary scholarship has been “la question

²¹ See above, n. 5.

²² On the genre of the texts which comprise Sulpicius' writings about Martin, see below Chapters II and III. On the problematic truth-claims and quasi-historical discourse of ancient saints' *Lives* and other similar texts, see among others, J. Coleiro, "St. Jerome's Lives of the Hermits," *VCh* 11.3 (1957): 161-178, who remarks, "There is no doubt that in writing these four pieces Jerome claimed to be writing history. But history according to Jerome could be written in more than one way . . . it could be elaborated by a machinery of rhetorical adjuncts so as to provide entertainment as well as information. More recently, A. Cameron has given the standard treatment of early Christian rhetorical practices in her *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), *passim* but especially 89-119.

martinienne”, the apparent problems of the corpus’ historicity.²³ Even in his own day, readers seem to have questioned the veracity of Sulpicius’ biography.²⁴ Babut argues that this skepticism was eminently reasonable, explaining that Sulpicius must have altered the chronology of Martin’s life as represented; that he relied heavily on Athanasius’ *Life of Antony*; that the text was derivative and historically dubious.²⁵ Babut wrote specifically against all those who took too literally the testimony of Sulpicius, scholars who, he says, continued “une tradition hagiographique.”²⁶ He explains, “Ils n’ont pas fait abstraction, en étudiant la vie de l’évêque Martin, de la gloire de saint Martin, et ils ont oublié d’appliquer à son histoire leurs règles et leurs habitudes de methode.”²⁷

H. Delehaye responded to such criticism by cannily questioning the apparent allusions and borrowings adduced by Babut, in an attempt to show the originality (and therefore presumed authenticity) of the *Life*’s portrayal of Martin.²⁸ Jacques Fontaine, whose monumental commentary on the *Life* has colored Martinian scholarship for the past forty years, continued in a similar vein, defending the Martinian writings and their loudly and persistently proclaimed veracity, even while turning toward questions of composition, of rhetoric and of genre. On this question of historicity, it is Stancliffe who has offered the most balanced take, carefully

²³ Babut, *Saint Martin de Tours* (Paris: H. Champion, 1912). It was Jacques Fontaine who so termed the debate; see Fontaine, *Vie*, 171-210.

²⁴ *cf. ep. 1.2, G 3.15.2.*

²⁵ On the problems of chronology, see especially Babut, 166-172; on Sulpicius’ literary models, Babut 73-89.

²⁶ *ibid.*, 9.

²⁷ *ibid.*, 9-10.

²⁸ H. Delehaye, “Saint Martin et Sulpice Sévère,” *Analecta Bollandiana* 38 (1920), 5-136.

adjudging what we can and cannot know about Martin and his milieu on the basis of Sulpicius' writings.²⁹ In fact, her monograph brings us quite reasonably to the limits of our possible historical knowledge of Martin, at least from the evidence given by Sulpicius.

There is, of course, nothing inherently wrong with historicizing concerns. I would suggest, however, that there are other questions we might ask of these texts, questions which will occasion novel observations and understandings. Indeed, one unfortunate result of this narrow focus has been the tendency to obscure the so-called supplementary texts in the Martinian corpus. Sulpicius' three letters and his dialogue—important works in and of themselves—are regularly understood as little more than apology, as Sulpicius' attempts to defend his portrayal of Martin in the *Life*. To the extent that these texts are treated at all, they are considered as essentially secondary to the original *Life*. Fontaine explains the supplemental texts just so. Discussing the *Gallus*, for example, Fontaine writes: “Pour répliquer à l’hostilité de l’épiscopat, aussi bien que pour stimuler la foi des moines martinien en la sainteté exceptionnelle de leur maître, Sulpice ne va pas se contenter—y compris face à des magistrats et même à des empereurs—d’accumuler des nouveaux récits de miracles opérés par Martin dans tous les rangs de la société gallo-romaine.”³⁰ This is a text, Fontaine contends, best explained as apology. What is more, this explanation is inextricably bound with his own defense of Sulpicius' historicity. The interrelatedness of the Martinian corpus, the echoes and allusions which punctuate it, become for Fontaine arsenal (and sometimes obstacles) in his defense of “la vérité historique” of Sulpicius' compositions.³¹ For, even though Fontaine has rightly turned our attention to literary questions in

²⁹ Clare Stancliffe, *St. Martin and His Hagiographer: History and Miracle in Sulpicius Severus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983).

³⁰ Fontaine, *Gallus*, 26.

³¹ See, for example, the discussion of the parallels between *VM* 16 and *G* 2.2 in Fontaine, *Vie*, 830.

these texts, nevertheless he too often marshals his observations in a futile—or at least unnecessary—effort to apologize for Sulpicius and for Martin, to demonstrate the general historicity of Sulpicius’ portrait.

On this particular question, Stancliffe comes to a conclusion not so different from Fontaine, explaining the later texts rather straightforwardly as apology. The *Life*—so the explanation goes—had incurred unbearable criticism only a short time after being published, a fact which demanded response from Sulpicius. Stancliffe explains the purpose underlying these texts especially by appealing to their intended readership. “Sulpicius thought of his immediate audience as comprising the circle of ascetic converts in Gaul and probably beyond;”³² however, she points also to the apparent critics of Martinian asceticism, suggesting that “Sulpicius was not exactly writing the *Vita Martini* for the Gallo-Roman episcopate; but he was, in a sense, writing against them.”³³ As for the letters, she says that they “grew out of the *Vita*, completing and defending its portrayal of Martin.”³⁴ The *Gallus* she explains in much the same way, emphasizing that “an apologetic purpose is far more in evidence than in the *Vita*.”³⁵ She accounts more fully for the difference between the *Life* and the *Gallus*: “in the *Dialogues* the controversial nature of Martin’s ideal is brought out into the open, whereas for most of the *Vita* it is simply implied. This difference was probably due partly to the reception given to the *Vita*; partly, perhaps, to an increasing polarization of the differences between ascetics and bishops in Gaul

³² Stancliffe, 72.

³³ *ibid.*, 73.

³⁴ *ibid.*, 83.

³⁵ *ibid.*, 83.

between 396 and 406; and partly to a difference in genre.”³⁶ The first two explanations amount to variations on the theme. Martin, Sulpicius and the *Life* are embattled and need defending. The third apparent explanation, perceptive but underdeveloped in Stancliffe, I address explicitly in my second and third chapters.³⁷

Indeed, the question of genre is an essential one in this context. Even if we are to accept that the supplementary texts serve an essentially apologetic end, we still might question this particular literary development. Why a *Life*, why *Letters*, why dialogue? What makes each of these genres particularly suited to Sulpicius’ aims? More important yet, what necessitates the change? These questions are particularly pressing because it is still common enough to characterize Sulpicius’ Martinian corpus as belonging to some newly invented and decidedly Christian genre, namely hagiography. In this scholarly model, Athanasius’ *Life of Antony* initiates a novel tradition, establishing with that text a measure by which later hagiographers will judge themselves and their work. Though this is, in some senses, a problematic model, it does yet remain correct to note the beginnings of a nascent literary tradition: Jerome’s *Life of Paul*, for example, responds directly to Athanasius’ text, in a seemingly deliberate attempt to rival Antony on his own terms; Sulpicius’ Martinian corpus seems to work within this so-called ‘genre’ and responds—often explicitly—to the hagiographical literature that preceded it, so as to write a new Antony into a burgeoning western tradition of asceticism.

Nevertheless, we must be more rigorous in our assessment. For, especially in the fourth and fifth centuries, it would be too ambitious to term hagiography a genre, in the classical sense of the term. To identify a set of established discursive forms which accompany such texts would

³⁶ *ibid.*, 84-5.

³⁷ See Chapters II and III on the generic development of Sulpicius’ writings on Martin.

be in practice rather difficult: basic parameters, formulae, and methods of production are not especially in evidence. Krueger has marked out a set of rhetorical assumptions which undergird later Byzantine hagiography.³⁸ However, I will argue that more pertinent to Sulpicius' own authorial practice are the standard generic forms of classical antiquity. So-called hagiography in the period under discussion is quite simply too early in its development to evince the metadiscursive commentary which comes to accompany the boundaries—whether in practice respected or ignored—of classical literary genres. Moreover, the traditional and certainly most enduring definition of hagiography—that formulated by Hippolyte Delehaye, the influential Bollandist whose work inaugurated the modern critical study of saints and the literary output which accompanied their cults—would leave out far too much of the late ancient corpus of hagiographical literature, perhaps even so important a text as the *Life of Antony*.³⁹ For a text to be hagiography, according to Delehaye, “il faudra donc réserver ce nom à tout monument écrit inspiré par le culte des saints, et destiné à le promouvoir.”⁴⁰ The strength of such a definition lies in its allowance for formal variety, in its emphasis on subject matter and purpose.⁴¹ However, it does not account for those texts which describe a living holy man; nor those which (like the *Life of Antony*) seek consciously to prevent cultic activity and other honors upon burial;⁴² nor again

³⁸ Krueger, 5 and *passim*

³⁹ cf. Claudia Rapp, "The origins of hagiography and the literature of early monasticism: purpose and genre between tradition and innovation," in *Unclassical Traditions, Volume I: Alternatives to the Classical Past in Late Antiquity*, C. Kelly, R. Flower, and M. S. Williams, eds., 121.

⁴⁰ Delehaye, 2.

⁴¹ cf. Rapp, "Origins of hagiography," 121.

⁴² *Vita Antonii* 91.6-7.

those which are collections of sayings, conferences, even whole lives of assorted and various figures.⁴³

The attempt to define hagiography as a genre in a rather more formal sense has led scholars to look for antecedents in the literature of classical antiquity. Because of the (perceived) preeminence of *Lives* in the hagiographical corpus, a common course has been to identify as generic precursors the lives (*bioi* and *vitae*) of philosophers and pagan holy men.⁴⁴ The result is a definition of hagiography (on those rare occasions when the word is used with any generic precision), which has only a very limited scope: hagiography is the literary representation of a holy man's life. The trouble with such a formulation is that the hagiographical literature of late antiquity displays far more diversity of form. We have already noted that sayings and collective lives are a natural part of this corpus; so too will the reader encounter miracle stories (sometimes performed by a living saint, other times effected posthumously), travel narratives, letters, sermons, funerary orations, even dialogue.⁴⁵

Nevertheless, there remains some unexpected utility in the attempt to identify biography as a classical source for late ancient Christian hagiography. For, what the biographical writing of antiquity emphasizes is the representation of "individuals whose lives might be regarded as

⁴³ Such as the *Apophthegmata Patrum*, the *Historia Monachorum* or, of course, Sulpicius' *Gallus*.

⁴⁴ For example, Garth Fowden, "The Pagan Holy Man in Late Antique Society," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 102 (1982):33-59.

⁴⁵ Of course, it has been argued that even such diverse (and well established) generic forms hew to the admittedly loose conventions of classical biography. In the current context, see especially P.R. Coleman-Norton, "The Biographical Form of the *Vitae Sanctorum*," *JThSt* 26 (1925): 256-262.

paradigmatic for a historical period or as instructive for a particular way of life.”⁴⁶ That is to say, classical biography takes for granted the didactic function of the exemplary models represented in the text. Claudia Rapp has adduced in particular the use of *pragmata*, *apophthegmata*, and *chreiai* in ancient biography as an essential precursor to the practice of Christian hagiographical writing: “Inasmuch as historical writing is intended to provide models of conduct, biographical writing shares this exhortative function, and both use anecdotes and sayings to the same effect . . . [T]he Christian hagiographer’s most elementary borrowing from classical literature was . . . not the brushstrokes, but the selection of paint on the portraitist’s palette, the typical sayings and anecdotes that reveal the character of his sitter.”⁴⁷ The hagiographical literature of late antiquity borrows from classical biography not some generic form, but rather one essential piece around which a coherent genre might eventually coalesce. To write of a saint is to construct in literary form an exemplary model of ethical conduct. Though such a text may evince any number of formal characteristics, nevertheless one consistent component seems always to be the author’s use of memorable words and deeds, which at their foundation have an essentially protreptic function. Rapp therefore explicitly nuances Delehaye’s definition, which assumes that hagiography is bound by a common purpose: “A closer look at the beginnings of the ascetic movement in Egypt has, I hope, shown that this common purpose was not the propagation of the cult of one particular dead saint, but the spiritual advancement of any number of disciples of an abba who followed his example in deed and adhered to his teaching in words.”⁴⁸ Rapp’s

⁴⁶ Claudia Rapp, “The Origins of Hagiography and the Literature of Early Monasticism,” in *Unclassical Traditions*, C. Kelly, R. Flower and M.S. Williams, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge Philological Society, 2010), 120-1.

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, 121.

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, 130.

definition is at once more inclusive and more descriptive than that of Delehayé. At the same time, like Delehayé, she assimilates literary genre to purpose or content.⁴⁹

This is one effective means of accounting for the diversity of so-called hagiographical literature. To some extent, however, it misses the point. Genre is a formal descriptor: it coalesces not around some shared purpose or common content, but around a shared form. According to such a definition, texts with ostensibly similar ends can have their own distinct genres. And texts of the same genre can evince markedly different literary purposes. Sulpicius' corpus is in fact among the best evidence for this: it comprises three distinct genres (life, letters and dialogue) but all the texts—I argue—participate in a larger literary program whose basic aim is to represent the *uirtus* of Martin. To assign these texts the label hagiography is not particularly helpful. If we were to read these texts as belonging to some shared genre, our approach would have an innate tendency to obscure the essential distinctions between the a life, a letter and a dialogue.

This is not to deny the fact that Sulpicius' diverse writings on Martin are buttressed by a consistent rhetorical framework. Marc van Uytfanghe has attempted to move this conversation beyond the definitions of genre by identifying in ancient literature a "discours hagiographique".⁵⁰ He describes a rhetorical approach, apparent in a wide range of ancient literature,⁵¹ which is marked by specific discursive features. This notion he borrows from Michel de Certeau, who had

⁴⁹ Her appeal to the literary form of *chreiai* is noted, but here again she suggests that this classical genre "signal[s] and underpin[s] this *intent* even at the level of literary form," *ibid.*, 130 (emphasis mine).

⁵⁰ M. van Uytfanghe, "L'hagiographie: un <<genre>> Chrétien ou antique tardif," *AB* 111 (1993): 135-188.

⁵¹ That is to say, not only in texts commonly described as Christian. Uytfanghe adduces a number of "pagan" witnesses to this discourse, for example Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius*, the *Lives of Pythagoras*, or Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus*, 149-159.

characterized hagiographical literature as essentially a discourse on *uirtus* (inasmuch as that word signifies both the qualities—the virtue— of the holy man and the powers he wields as a result of that virtue).⁵² Uytfanghe enlarges the sense of this term, attributing to hagiographical discourse four particular components: i) the explicit relationship between the holy man and a divinity, ii) the at times ambiguous relationship between the author's pronouncements and historical reality, iii) the text's markedly performative—as opposed to informative—function, and iv) the themes and archetypes which agree with Bieler's description of the θεῖος ἀνὴρ, especially the qualities of *uirtus* in its double sense. That Sulpicius' depiction of Martin in the *Life*, the letters and the *Gallus* adhere to these basic characteristics is undeniable. What is more, Uytfanghe's description allows for the possibility of a discourse held in common without the elision of generic difference.

Indeed, it is with Uytfanghe's quite sensible definition that we find justification for the relative integrity of a "Martinian corpus" in Sulpicius' larger oeuvre. My dissertation does not explicitly treat the *Chronicle*, written nearly contemporaneous to or perhaps just before the *Gallus*.⁵³ Though the *Chronicle* quite naturally shares some common aims with Sulpicius' Martinian texts,⁵⁴ nevertheless I would suggest that it differs from the *Life*, the letters and the *Gallus* to the extent that it does not participate in the hagiographic discourse which Uytfanghe

⁵² M. de Certeau, "Une variante: l'édification hagiographique," in *L'écriture de l'histoire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975),

⁵³ We cannot firmly date either of the texts. Stancliffe, *St. Martin and his Hagiographer*, 80-81, argues quite sensibly for a range of 403-406 for the composition of the *Chronicle* and 404-406 for the *Gallus*. I make a larger discussion of the dating of the Martinian corpus below in Chapter I, 30-37.

⁵⁴ cf. Stancliffe, *St. Martin and his Hagiographer*, 82.

has identified. In this dissertation, I argue for the presence of a literary project spanning these texts which take as their focus Martin and his *uirtus*.

Uytfanghe's argument is sensitive to the fact that—for all their rhetorical similarities—the canon of late ancient texts commonly regarded as hagiography itself evinces an exceptional variety of generic form. A preponderance are *Lives*, of course, but others are collections of sayings, conferences, letters, dialogues. This should not be seen to diminish their shared techniques. We might even regard this as a genre in the making. Nevertheless, my own reading presupposes that, in Sulpicius' corpus, the formal differences—differences which cut across the common subject matter—demand an explanation. We should now be able to see how the use of so totalizing a designation as hagiography would inevitably obscure the necessary distinctions between genres in the Latin literature of antiquity. When Sulpicius therefore chooses to write a work structured according to the *species dialogi*, I would argue that he accomplishes more than simple *variatio*.⁵⁵ This literary choice demands more careful consideration.⁵⁶

Such literary questions must be answered by attending to the essentially rhetorical nature of the texts. And indeed, in the years since Stancliffe addressed so thoroughly the historical questions which attend the Martinian corpus, scholars have slowly begun to ask what might be gained from approaching these texts not as documentary evidence but as literature. What might we learn by asking literary questions for their own sake rather than in service of a latent historicism?

⁵⁵ And this despite his claim that his choice of genre is mainly intended to prevent *fastidium* in the reader, *G* 3.5.2.

⁵⁶ On which, see below Chapters II and III.

In just such a way has Christian Tornau focused on the *Life*, attending to its intertextual resonances with the *Life of Antony*. Indeed, he addresses the very same material as Babut (and Delehay after him), but demonstrates that the allusions serve a different sort of end, not as evidence for or against historicity but rather as evidence for a complex literary relationship. Sulpicius, he suggests, writes the conclusion to Martin's *Life* in direct conversation with the *Life of Antony*. Pointing to a number of striking textual parallels, Tornau makes clear that Sulpicius constructs his epilogue as a means of discursively legitimizing himself as successor to Martin, and likewise as successor to Athanasius in the context of hagiographical composition.

Tornau's approach suggests a potentially fruitful means of reconsidering this dossier. He attends to that evidence usually marshaled in service of somewhat facile historicist approaches to the Martinian corpus and shows that it is instead evidence for Sulpicius' own discursive constructions. Virginia Burrus goes one step further, asking what purpose this historicizing discourse—evident in Sulpicius as much as in modern scholars—might serve in the text. Again situating the presence of these literary supplements in the context of historicity, Burrus writes: “Reopened by Martin's death almost before it had come to a close, the wound in the initial *Life*—the lacking corpse—gives rise to supplemental letters of consolation, lamentation, praise, and pointed self-defense. Pierced by the swift darts of ongoing criticism, the martyred text spills its blood further into the myriad channels of the *Dialogues*.”⁵⁷ Sulpicius is forced to defend himself and to defend Martin against claims that the miraculous deeds recounted in the *Life* were outrageous or unbelievable, even pure and utter lies. And indeed, Burrus is well-attuned to the ever-present protestations of historicity which mark the Martinian texts.

⁵⁷ Virginia Burrus, *The Sex Lives of Saints: An Erotics of Ancient Hagiography* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 92.

“[T]he sophisticated Sulpicius, initially playing at literary simplicity, implodes the ambivalence inherent in ancient traditions of prose narrative: the already compromised distinction between history and romance, truth and fiction, fantasy and lie is brought to a point of crisis . . . It is the unsettling potency of the “impossible real” mobilized within the literary imaginary that Sulpicius outrageously insists on as he opens his biographical text onto the realm of the fantastic, where imagination does not merely reflect but continually reconstitutes reality, pressing readers past the limits not only of plausibility but even of possibility.”⁵⁸

Burrus here adduces a literary tendency which is almost the exact opposite of Barthes’ “l’effet de réel”: Sulpicius writes an absolutely impossible, absolutely unreal life all while making constant claims to the absolute veracity of the narrative. Indeed, Burrus offers a provocative explanation of the interrelatedness of the Martinian corpus when she sees it as a sort of prolonged meditation on the possibilities offered by a discourse which constantly proclaims (and then undercuts) “the apparent referentiality of historical narrative.”⁵⁹

Even in these decidedly literary readings, readings which make no claims on authenticity or reality, it is difficult to escape “la question martinienne”. And, since Burrus and Tornau, the most recently published scholarship on this question has—in a reactionary sort of turn—attempted to revive these explicit questions of historicity. T.D. Barnes has published a revised version of his doctoral work from the 1960s, in which he takes up up Babut’s now century-old argument against the veracity of Sulpicius’ testimony.⁶⁰ In addition to adducing the apparent inconsistencies across the various works, Barnes also catalogues those numerous protestations of

⁵⁸ Burrus, *Sex Lives* 92-3.

⁵⁹ Burrus, *Sex Lives*, 93.

⁶⁰ T.D. Barnes, *Early Christian Hagiography and Roman History* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 199-234.

historicity which Burrus has discussed. He compares them to classical and contemporary works which make use of similar tropes, taking this (rather problematically) as straightforward evidence of deliberate invention in the Martinian corpus. Burrus reads more perceptively when she attempts (if only briefly) to understand what it might mean for Sulpicius to write such claims.

Following Burrus, I would agree that the problems of historicity are a prevailing concern for Sulpicius. So often does he make claims to his own trustworthiness, so often does he adduce eyewitness testimony and defend his narrative with the most ardent of arguments, that it would be rather short-sighted to diminish the importance of an historicizing discourse in the Martinian corpus. I do, however, want to offer a reading which I think more fully explains the specific utility of writing the life of a holy man across multiple works, of making Martin's life extend beyond his *Life*. I would suggest that Sulpicius rewrites Martin not just on apologetic grounds, nor just as a meditation on the relationship between truth and fiction; he does so, rather, because the process of rewriting, the performance of repetition, these notions resonate with something fundamental to Sulpicius' understanding of Martin and Martinian asceticism. Over the course of my dissertation, as I move from a discussion of narrative to genre to exemplarity, the possibilities of literary and ascetic imitation serve as a regular touchstone for my argument.

Of course, this progression in the scholarship of Sulpicius mirrors an ongoing, if increasingly tired, debate among scholars of late ancient history and religion, one often described in terms of questions about the relationship between rhetoric and reality.⁶¹ The uneasy

⁶¹ Absolutely foundational to this debate is Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire*. Since her work especially, "rhetoric" and "reality" have become watchwords among scholars of late antiquity: the descriptive and alliterative qualities of the phrase make it a popular choice in the titles of monographs and other volumes. Most recently, there is the forthcoming collection of lectures on Libanius from Rafaella Cribiore, *Libanius the Sophist: Rhetoric, Reality and Religion in the Fourth Century* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell

intellectual equivalence between "words" and "things", the past and its representation, has been broadly acknowledged in scholarship on the late ancient world, and the implications of the epistemological uncertainty precipitated by the linguistically-oriented philosophy and literary criticism of the late twentieth century have been considered at great length elsewhere.⁶² This is not to say that there is some broad consensus about our ability as historians to account for the inherent constructedness of language and other human productions, but some recent scholarship has shown how we might comprehend the rhetorical nature of texts without abandoning completely the possibility of understanding (if not reconstructing) the reality of the past.⁶³ This is essential work, but my own project takes a somewhat different tack. My aim is to describe the literary workings of a single textual corpus. I would read Sulpicius' text not as a looking glass

University Press, 2013). Also, Willi Braun, ed. *Rhetoric and Reality in Early Christianities* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2005), and much earlier, Robert L. Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews: Rhetoric and Reality in the Late Fourth Century* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1983), among many others. This brief list is not meant to make light of an important debate that has seriously advanced our understanding of the late ancient world. The shape of our field has in many ways been formed by the ostensibly opposing methodologies of social historians—represented most prominently in the work of Peter Brown—whose approach assumes the possibility of accessing a real, lived past and those of recent religious and intellectual historians—here we might think of Elizabeth Clark's work—who have attended especially to the textual constructions inherent to the study of history. Of course, the divisions are not so stark: Brown is regularly sensitive to the rhetorical qualities of ancient literature (even so-called documentary sources) and even if the lady vanishes, so to speak, in Clark's work, even if she claims "we cannot with certainty claim to hear the voices of "real" women in early Christian texts," nevertheless her particular approach allows us to "move beyond the purely linguistic to explore the social forces at work in these reconstructions." Elizabeth Clark, "The Lady Vanishes: Dilemmas of a Feminist Historian after the "Linguistic Turn", *Church History* 67.1 (1998):1-31, quote from 31.

⁶² Elizabeth Clark, *History, Theory, Text: Historians and the Linguistic Turn* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

⁶³ Two recent examples of admittedly very different books that nevertheless make sensitive use of theory in order to advance our understanding of the lived past are Kim Haines-Eitzen, *The Gendered Palimpsest: Women, Writing and Representation in Early Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) and Eric Rebillard, *Christians and Their Many Identities in Late Antiquity, North Africa, 200-450 CE* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012).

through which we might get a view, however obscure, of an historical individual and his social context. I suggest instead that those things which would seem to obscure our view may well be the point: the so-called "rhetoric" of the text demands study for its own sake, not just as a means to some other end. I start from the recognition that, when reading Sulpicius, our evidence for Martin as an historical figure consists entirely in a literary portrayal. It should follow that there is no longer much use in rehashing debates about historicity when any knowledge we have of Martin is conditioned by a series of texts whose historical understanding is founded on assumptions vastly different from those of modern historians.⁶⁴ Although one of the interlocutors in the *Gallus* claims to be recounting *ueritas historiae* in his narrative depiction of Martin, nevertheless the texts as we have received them invite a consideration of the structures and forms that give Sulpicius' corpus its shape.

The first chapter addresses the narrative structure of the Sulpicius' Martinian literature. As the corpus progresses from the *Life* to letters to dialogue, the narrative is consistently interrupted, postponed and prolonged. Having delayed Martin's death beyond the bounds of the *Life* and over a series of three letters, Sulpicius finally gives in and recounts the saint's death, only to revive Martin—so to speak—in the *Gallus* which follows nearly ten years later. The *Gallus* shows how Martin in his afterlife might be re-animated through the writing of hagiography. The narrative form of this work allows his deeds to be told and re-told, read ever and again. In this dialogue, the reader is able to see quite explicitly how *sermo*—here present in the form of discussion and dialogue—affords Martin a literary afterlife which is an echo of his

⁶⁴ I think we can responsibly make this claim even while we acknowledge the value of historical work—like that of Barnes, *Early Christian Hagiography*, or Stancliffe, *St. Martin and His Hagiographer*—done in the spirit of describing the past *wie es eigentlich gewesen*.

expected reward in heaven. The text comes to depict a sort of endless middle; it presents an episodic narrative in which Martin's deeds are piled one upon another, with little regard for temporal framework and no apparent possibility of closure. Martin's virtues are so great, his deeds so numerous, that their telling exists in a perpetual state of narrativity.

In the second and third chapters, I shift my focus from narrative to genre, in an attempt to explain the (not self-evident) generic shift from biography to letter form to dialogue in the Martinian corpus. I would suggest that, with this shift, the role of the reader becomes all the more dramatically foregrounded within the text. In the *Life*, the audience is external to the text, a passive witness to the miraculous deeds of Martin. In the *Letters*, the primary reader is its recipient, directly addressed and explicitly invited to share in Martin's intercession. In the *Gallus*, this development is taken to its logical extreme: the primary audience to the narrative—the interlocutors—directly participate in the composition of the text, becoming authors themselves. This progression is especially compelling because Sulpicius addresses therein the task of the reader, demonstrating how, through careful engagement with the text, one might benefit from Martin's intercession: the Martinian corpus teaches its audience how best to read hagiography.

In the fourth chapter, I examine the content of that hermeneutic programme. In the chapter's first half, I show how the *Gallus* participates in a markedly classical (or perhaps better, traditionally Roman) rhetoric of exemplarity, with Sulpicius writing *exempla* into a series of passages linked by mimetic impulses—both literary and ethical—which serve to render the past as effectively coeval (if not quite contemporaneous) with the present. In the second half of this chapter, I turn in particular to Sulpicius' portrayal of Martin in the *Gallus*, a figure whose words and deeds often seem to conform to the expectations of traditional exemplary discourse, but

likewise a figure who is so exceptional as to render that discourse invalid. Indeed, the somewhat ambiguous role of Martin in this discourse suggests the very problems inherent to exemplarity. For Martin is an exemplary figure in every sense of the term: he is a model, a particular (if ideal) instance of a broader type; at the same time, he is absolutely exceptional, inimitable and therefore an impossible guide for ethical action. The chapter concludes by attending to the one apparent instance of successful imitation of Martin in the *Gallus*: this imitation consists entirely in literary production, in the very writing of hagiography.

My dissertation will therefore demonstrate the potential of reading these texts as literature; of parsing their rhetorical content and not only for the purpose of historical reconstruction or theological debate; of understanding the overarching programme of an author who is particularly invested in his own writerly persona. We will see that Sulpicius is especially conscious of the shared literary project of author and audience. In particular, we will see that he writes his audience into his texts, and that he does so as a means of obtaining their salvation through participation in a carefully elaborated literary practice, one founded especially on imitative or exemplary reading.

Chapter I

UNBOUNDED SPEECH: MARTIN AND THE POSSIBILITIES OF PERPETUAL DISCOURSE

Sulpicius Severus' *Life of Martin* seems to come to the most abrupt of conclusions; the reader is left wanting, the *Life* finished while Martin yet lives. Sulpicius, having recounted his journey to meet Martin and learn the facts of his life, declares: "Now my book must come to an end."¹ It feels like an unexpected turn in the narrative, an ending which comes just as the author meets his subject for the first time. And, the text itself very much encourages this sense of surprise.

Sulpicius is praising Martin's virtues, his wisdom, when all of a sudden: *sed iam finem*. It is a precipitous ending to a narrative which had been piling miracle upon miracle, with little sign of ceasing. This seemingly peculiar decision, however, will allow Sulpicius the opportunity to rewrite Martin, so to speak, to revalue and re-inscribe the meaning of his *Life*: because he has written this life without end, Sulpicius conceives the need for further supplement. There is yet no satisfying death to end Martin's virtuous *Life*; the saint's story remains unfinished. Sulpicius will write first an end to Martin's life in a series of *Letters* and then a literary afterlife for the saint in a dialogue called the *Gallus*.

My initial argument in this chapter is essentially descriptive and, I would think, relatively uncontroversial. I attend especially to Sulpicius' attempts to negotiate the narrative problem of closure in the Martinian corpus. I suggest, first of all, that the *Life* resists a definitive end, inasmuch as the text concludes with the holy man still alive. The result is a text which is not so

¹ *VM* 26.1, "Sed iam liber finem postulat."

much unfinished as open-ended. The three letters that follow the *Life* explicitly dramatize this openness, enacting an extended play of narrative postponement. There is but one final and inevitable end to Sulpicius' narrative of Martin's life. With that life already extended beyond the bounds of the original *Life*, Martin's death—its inevitability, but also its postponement—becomes the essential narrative content of the three subsequent letters. And indeed, were the third letter, which narrates the circumstances of Martin's death, to be Sulpicius' last word on that holy man, such a *telos* would seem especially satisfying. The author, however, returns again to his subject some years later, granting Martin an extended literary afterlife. The *Gallus* re-animates Martin after his death and writes the holy man into a narrative whose own parameters are potentially boundless.

I subsequently argue that this play at closure, its frustration and eventual fulfillment, is for Sulpicius a means of defying the parameters of biographical narrative. In fact, the multi-volume and multi-genre nature of the corpus represents the essential content of Sulpicius' innovation on earlier *Lives* and those other ancient texts which participate in what Uytfanghe has termed "discours hagiographique".² The *Life of Martin* has long been read as an archetype of late ancient saints' lives, but what makes Sulpicius' depiction of Martin so compelling is this literary trajectory which carries the reader through multiple texts and multiple genres. And of course, it is the explicit recognition of such innovation that most obviously justifies the current project: these so-called "supplementary" works represent Sulpicius' most original contribution. We must therefore better situate them in the context of the author's literary program, broadly conceived. The *Gallus*, in particular, seems to engage the same problems as the earlier *Life* while offering a subtle revision of sorts. In a narrative context, that revision is unsurprisingly addressed to the

² See Introduction, pp. 14-16.

problem of closure. Rather than simply postponing, delaying and prolonging, however, the *Gallus* seems to construct the potential for a literary practice unbounded by an ending. The dialogue picks up Martin's story *in medias res* and advances thematically rather than chronologically. The narrative is not governed by a temporal movement towards Martin's inevitable death. Indeed, the experienced reader knows that this death has always already come, but the paratactic structure of the work, replete with episode and digression, seems to compel the reader to admit the possibility of a life without end.

As the corpus progresses from the *Life* to letters to dialogue, the narrative is consistently interrupted, postponed and prolonged. A reader of Sulpicius Severus' writings on Martin will eventually realize that—even in this ostensibly paradigmatic hagiographical corpus—the author resists the traditional bounds of biographical literature. The *Life* ends without ending, Martin's death delayed indefinitely. The letters which follow depict multiple deaths—a near-death, potential and exemplary deaths, even a dreamed death—all while continuing to postpone the real thing, at least until the last possible moment. Then, having finally laid Martin to rest, Sulpicius revives the saint in a dialogue whose narrative itself lacks any proper beginning or ending. In the *Gallus*, the narrative has no bounds, its telling limited only by events in the narrators' own external frame of reference.³

This dialogue shows how Martin in his afterlife might be re-animated through the writing of hagiography. The narrative form of this work allows his deeds to be told and re-told, read ever

³ Throughout the Martinian corpus, the author makes clear two primary narrative frames of reference: the diegetic sequence of the text, in which Martin is the foremost actor; and the external (extra-diegetic) frame, in which Sulpicius the narrator writes. The *Gallus* actually introduces a third intervening frame, by virtue of the fact that Sulpicius writes what purports to be a conversation between three interlocutors. The external narrator (Sulpicius) depicts a narrative world in which three interlocutors (one of whom is Sulpicius) themselves narrate accounts of Martin.

and again. In this dialogue, the reader is able to see quite explicitly how *sermo*—here present in the form of discussion and dialogue—affords Martin a literary afterlife which is an echo of his expected reward in heaven.⁴ If the *Life* and letters prove Martin’s ability to control the circumstances of his death and (what is more salient) his hagiographer’s ability thereby to frustrate readerly expectations; then the *Gallus* proves Martin’s ability to overcome the apparent finality of death, proves the hagiographer’s ability to construct a text which exists in a perpetual state of narrativity. That is to say, the *Gallus*, by virtue of its essentially episodic narrative structure, depicts a sort of endless middle in the necessarily final trajectory of Martin’s life. The saint’s story, as told in the *Gallus*, does not start with some natural or logical beginning; nor does it follow a chronological (or otherwise-ordered) narrative arc leading to some inevitable *telos*. In fact, the account ends only when its internal narrators are themselves constrained. The text makes clear that Martin’s life and deeds overflow the bounds of the work itself. The saint is a surplus constantly spilling over any narrative that would contain him. The text depicts an essentially episodic narrative, in which Martin’s deeds are piled one upon another, with little regard for temporal framework and no apparent possibility of closure. What is more, this unbounded narrative naturally affords its participants the possibility of endless discourse: the interlocutors converse freely in a display of apparent narrative abundance.

Dating Sulpicius’ Martinian corpus

Any analysis of the Martinian corpus’ narrative structure demands a thorough appraisal of the internal arrangement of the texts: let us not begin with the assumption that modern editions

⁴ Cf. *ep.* 2.16.

inevitably reflect the original order, whether we take *original* to mean the dates of composition, the actual experience of late ancient readers or perhaps even Sulpicius' intended order of reading. There is some evidence—internal to the corpus and from external sources—through which we might at least begin to determine an order according to that first definition, namely the chronology of Sulpicius' composition. The *Life* was of course written first, probably in 396 or early 397. The still extant (and relatively well dated) epistolary corpus of Paulinus of Nola is especially useful in establishing as much. Paulinus, famous convert to ascetic Christianity, is a frequent correspondent of Sulpicius.⁵ The *Life of Martin* receives explicit mention in his letters, when Paulinus remarks on his recent receipt of that text.⁶ This letter can be firmly dated to the spring of 397.⁷ In an earlier letter to Sulpicius, from the summer of 396, Paulinus makes no mention of the *Life*.⁸ The text almost certainly would have been completed in the time between these two letters. Internal evidence in the corpus seems to confirm as much: Sulpicius represents

⁵ Thirteen letters to Sulpicius are extant in Paulinus' letter collection: *Epp.* 1, 5, 11, 17, 22-24, 27-32. None survive from Sulpicius to Paulinus.

⁶ Paulinus, *ep.* 11.11, "neque enim tibi donatum fuisset enarrare Martinum, nisi dignum os tuum sacris laudibus mundo corde fecisses. benedictus igitur tu homo domino, qui tanti sacerdotis et manifestissimi confessoris historiam tam digno sermone quam iusto affectu percensuisti. beatus et ille pro meritis, qui dignum fide et uita sua meruit historicum, qui et ad diuinam gloriam suis meritis et ad humanam memoriam tuis litteris consecratur."

⁷ Recent scholarship has accepted the dating of this letter first proposed by P. Reinelt, *Studien über die Briefe des hl. Paulinus von Nola* (Breslau: Druck von R. Nischkowsky, 1903), 11 and taken up by P. Fabre, *Essai sur la Chronologie de l'oeuvre de Saint Paulin de Nole* (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1948), 23-27; cf. D. Trout, *Paulinus of Nola: Life, Letters, Poems* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 127 and S. Mratschek, *Der Briefwechsel des Paulinus von Nola* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2002), 457-8.

⁸ Paulinus, *ep.* 5. On the dating, cf. Mratschek, 141 and Trout, 169. Fabre, 19ff. outlines the evidence for this date.

Martin's death, traditionally dated to 397, as following close on that of the monk Clarus,⁹ who was already dead when the *Life* was written.¹⁰ This dating—a range between summer 396 and spring 397—is firmly established by the chronology of Paulinus' letters and seemingly corroborated by Sulpicius' own narrative.

All the remaining texts in the corpus refer explicitly or implicitly to the *Life*. In fact, the content of the first letter (as traditionally ordered) speaks directly to the *Life*'s reception.¹¹ Addressed to Eusebius, the letter offers an ardent defense of the *Life*'s historicity and of Martin's miraculous *uirtus*, while recounting the bishop's escape from death by fire. Obviously, we can know that it was published subsequent to the *Life*. The second letter, a *consolatio* addressed to the deacon Aurelius, reports a vision of Sulpicius in which he had premonition of Martin's death,

⁹ Sulpicius relates a vision of Martin ascending to heaven, in which he saw the recently deceased Clarus following his master, *ep.* 2.5, "Nec multum post, sanctum Clarum presbyterum, discipulum illius, qui nuper excesserat, uideo eadem qua magistrum uia scandere."

¹⁰ *VM* 23.1, "Clarus quidam adulescens nobilissimus, mox presbyter, nunc felici beatus excessu, cum, relictis omnibus, se ad Martinum contulisset, breui tempore ad summum fidei uirtutumque omnium culment enituit." Cf. Stancliffe, 72. Barnes, however, has questioned the traditional dating of Martin's death, suggesting he might have died as late as November, 401. See, T.D. Barnes, "The *Historia Augusta* and Christian Biography," *Historiae Augustae Colloquium Geneuense*, F. Paschoud, ed. (Bari: Edipuglia, 1999), 37. The suggestion is certainly defensible, but it cannot be taken to alter the date of composition or publication of the *Life*, as Barnes seems to suggest: "On the traditional chronology, it is hardly possible that Sulpicius Severus could have read the *HA* when he wrote the *Life of Martin*, i.e. before November 397. On the correct dating of Martin's death to 400 or 401, it becomes chronologically possible that he did," 38. Barnes does not here address the potential difficulty of Paulinus' *ep.* 11: there can be no question that the *Life* was written (and sent to Paulinus) before that letter. Its dating has by now been quite thoroughly vetted, and we can assert with some confidence that the *Life* had been finished before the spring of 397. This could, of course, change the absolute dating of Sulpicius' letters (written after Martin's death).

¹¹ *ep.* 1.1-2, "Hesterna die, cum ad me plerique monachi uenissent, inter fabulas iuges longumque sermonem mentio incidit libelli mei, quem de uita beati uiri Martini episcopi edidi, studioseque eum a multis legi libentissime audiebam. Interea indicatur mihi dixisse quendam, malo spiritu suscitatum, cur Martinus, qui mortuos suscitasset, flammis domibus depulisset, ipse nuper adustus incendio periculosae fuisset obnoxius passioni."

after which he awoke to receive that very news. This letter, too, makes explicit mention of the earlier *Life*, when Sulpicius envisions Martin holding that text, seeming to offer his approval.¹² The third letter is addressed to Sulpicius' mother Bassula and gives a narrative account of the bishop's death. The *Life* is referenced only implicitly,¹³ but internal evidence makes clear at any rate that the third letter follows the second.¹⁴

The position of the first relative to the others remains somewhat uncertain. Babut, argues against the traditional ordering, seemingly on the basis of Sulpicius' developing representation of his subject: "Martin n'était dans la Vie qu'un grand thaumaturge et un saint évêque. Il devient dans la Lettre à Aurélius un confesseur, un martyr auquel il n'a manqué que l'occasion. Dans la Lettre à Eusébius, il est déclaré «de tous point semblable aux apôtres», et comparé à saint Paul et à saint Pierre."¹⁵ Barnes follows Babut, urging that the "nature and tone of the first letter suggests that it was the last to be written."¹⁶ This is hardly sufficient proof, of course, but it does demonstrate that with the letters attempts at absolute dating might begin to falter. Of course, given their content, we can be certain that the second and third letters come after Martin's death. Though traditionally dated to 397—on the basis of (admittedly quite late) testimony from Gregory of Tours—Barnes has suggested revising the date of Martin's death to as late as 401.¹⁷ If

¹² *ep.* 2.3, "Adridensque mihi paululum, libellum, quem de uita illius scripseram, dextera praeferebat."

¹³ *ep.* 3.4, "Quasi uero ego illam epistulam aut legendam alii praeterquam ipsi ad quem missa uidetur ediderim, aut ego tanto sim operi destinatus ut omnia, quae de Martino cognosci oportet, me potissimum scribent notescant!"

¹⁴ *ep.* 3.3, "Nam ut de reliquis taceam, rogo quemadmodum tam cito ad te epistula illa potuit peruenire, quam nuper ad Aurelium diaconum scripseramus."

¹⁵ Babut, 37-38, quote from 38.

¹⁶ Barnes, *Early Christian Hagiography*, 216.

¹⁷ Barnes, "*Historia Augusta*", 37.

we were to accept his reasoning, these two letters (and perhaps also the first) would have been written sometime thereafter. I want to suggest that, at least for our purposes here, there is not much at stake in either of these debates. In attempts to define either the relative or the absolute dating of these texts, the evidence internal and external to the corpus falls short of certainty. And at any rate, Barnes seems to acknowledge the distinction between the order of composition and their apparent order upon publication: “[Sulpicius] placed the first [letter] where it is because the credibility of the *Life of Martin* was impugned as soon as it began to circulate.”¹⁸

Sulpicius writes the last text in the Martinian corpus most likely in 404 or thereabouts. External evidence provides a *terminus ante quem* of 411 for the *Gallus*: Jerome cites the text in his *Commentary on Ezekiel*.¹⁹ As for its chronology relative to the rest of the corpus, explicit references makes it quite obvious that the *Gallus* is published subsequent to the *Life*.²⁰ Likewise, internal evidence makes clear that it must follow *Letter 1*, which it explicitly references.²¹ There is moreover no reason to suggest that it was written before either of the two remaining *Letters*, given the time which has—in the narrative, at least—passed since Martin’s death.²² Indeed, it

¹⁸ Barnes, *Early Christian Hagiography*, 216.

¹⁹ *Comm. in Ezek.*, 36, “et nuper Seuerus noster in dialogo, cui Gallo nomen imposuit.” The commentary, begun in 411, was not finished until 414, though this section seems to have been written before Jerome’s writing was interrupted. On the dating of this commentary, see J.N. Kelly, *Jerome: His Life, Writings and Controversies* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), 304-308. Likewise, F. Cavallera, *Saint Jérôme: sa vie et son oeuvre* (Louvain: Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense Bureax, 1922), 50-56 discusses the chronologie of Jerome’s writings from 404-417.

²⁰ Multiple references to the earlier work can be found in the *Gallus*, the most notable being the interlocutor Gallus’ comparison of his impending narrative to Sulpicius’ earlier composition, at *G* 1.27, “Gallus ita coepit: — Cauendum mihi inprimis esse arbitror ne ea de Martini uirtutibus repetam quae in libro suo Sulpicius iste memorauit.” Other explicit references can be found at *G* 1.23 and 3.5.

²¹ *G* 2.9.

²² *G* 2.14

becomes clear that the dramatic action (whether properly “historical” or not) is set c. 403-4. Posthumianus, one of the three interlocutors, has just returned from a three-year journey to Egypt.²³ It is near the start of his trip that Posthumianus arrives in Alexandria, and he does so in the very midst of the Origenist controversy.²⁴ It was in 401 that Theophilus (after a rather abrupt change in convictions) gathered a synod at which to condemn the works of Origen; the dialogue here depicted by Sulpicius is meant to have taken place some three years later.²⁵ The text therefore was certainly written after 401, given that it references these events in Alexandria, and plausibly in or after 404, the ostensible narrative time.

What I think becomes clear is that the evidence so far examined can give us a reasonable sense of the chronology of Sulpicius' composition, but the attempt to provide a firm absolute (or even relative) date for these texts inevitably stumbles. Certain silences still thwart a secure dating for each individual text. Another potential source of evidence are the manuscripts in which these texts survive. The earliest extant manuscript witness—held by the Biblioteca Capitolare di Verona (*Veronensis* XXXVIII)—was produced in 517,²⁶ and remains among the best sources for the Martinian corpus, despite its occasional errors and idiosyncratic readings.²⁷ It supports the traditional order of the corpus: the *Life*, followed by the first, second and third letters, and finally the *Gallus*. We might therefore be tempted to say that this order represents the experience of late ancient readers. In the case of this particular manuscript (and those later witnesses dependent on

²³ *G* 1.1, 1.3.

²⁴ *G* 1.6.

²⁵ *G* 1.3.

²⁶ As recorded by the scribe, who gives his name as Ursicinus, f° 117.

²⁷ Fontaine, *Vie*, 216: “il apparaît, en dépit de ses erreurs et de ses leçons particulières, comme l’un des plus sûrs fondements de toute édition possible, dans l’état actuel de notre tradition.”

it), such seems to be the case. There are however a number of manuscripts, though rather later, which dramatically alter the contents and arrangement of the corpus. Some give only the *Life* followed by the first two letters (their order reversed);²⁸ others give the *Life* followed by the three letters (again in reverse order) followed by the *Gallus*;²⁹ another gives the *Life*, the third letter and the *Gallus*, with a work of Gennadius intervening between the *Life* and letter; other witnesses offer more variations still.³⁰ The point here is that manuscript order, which seems to offer the best indication of an actual reader's experience, need not be seen to reflect the scope of Sulpicius' literary project any better than modern editions.

I suggest therefore that for our purposes we adopt the order which most closely reflects an internally consistent chronology in the narrative of Martin's life and death. This would naturally demand that the *Life* comes first. The letters would proceed in order from the first to the second to the third (using the traditional numbering employed in both Halm and Fontaine). In the first of the letters, Martin is still alive, though the text itself relates a near-death experience. The second letter contains Sulpicius' vision of Martin's death and a report confirming it. The final letter narrates the circumstances of that death and describes the funerary celebrations which followed thereafter. The *Gallus* picks up a number of years later, with the three interlocutors reminiscing on the miraculous virtues Martin made manifest in his life.

The weight of all this evidence suggests a solution which is hardly revelatory. The arrangement of the corpus found standard in modern editions is certainly the most plausible. Let

²⁸ Representative here is the *Knoeringianus*, held by the Universitätsbibliothek der LMU München, from the 9th century; cf. Fontaine 216.

²⁹ *Ambrosianus H 224 inf.*; cf. Fontaine 217.

³⁰ For a discussion of the textual tradition and a discussion of the most reliable manuscript witnesses, see Fontaine, *Vie*, 215-22.

me once more be very clear, however, why that particular order is relevant to our current purposes: it reflects the literary scope of Sulpicius' Martinian project. I adopt this internal arrangement not because it is indicative of the absolute or relative date of composition (though such is likely). Rather, I take this arrangement as definitive because it reveals something about Sulpicius' developing representations of Martin.

What is most important for this particular study is how Sulpicius builds up an intended order of reading through the consistent use of those intratextual references collected above. Each text refers back to another in some way. It seems obvious to suggest that Sulpicius has not placed such references as a means of helping scholars think about the relative chronology of the corpus' composition. Rather, they help guide a reader through the corpus, marking out potential connections and indicating a narrative sequence which progresses from the *Life* through a series of three letters, building to a coda in Sulpicius' last-written work on Martin, the *Gallus*.

Though we need not assume that Sulpicius began writing the *Life* with the sure intention of supplementing it with letters and a dialogue, nevertheless we will see how in the process of composition he came to develop a narrative structure which allowed him to experiment with the formal features of biographical representation. We will see that, by extending Martin's life beyond the *Life*, Sulpicius was able to accomplish a literary project which explicitly innovated upon earlier *Lives*—most notably Athanasius' *Life of Anthony*—and which allowed Sulpicius to extend the ostensibly salvific practice of Martin-oriented *sermo* across multiple literary ventures.

A Life without End: The Conclusion to the *Life of Martin*

Sulpicius Severus' *Life of Martin* begins just as its readers might expect. From the saint's birth it proceeds—much like Athanasius' earlier *Life of Anthony*—through the nature of Martin's upbringing to his induction into the Christian faith.³¹ An account of the saint's miraculous deeds and holy virtues is set in motion by Martin's earliest vision of Christ, a vision occasioned by that famous act of saintly humility, Martin's cutting of his cloak to clothe a beggar outside the gates at Amiens;³² from there, Sulpicius moves—in carefully marked chronological order³³—to the spectacular miracles which precede Martin's election as bishop of Tours; Sulpicius then relates the still impressive feats which follow his assuming the episcopacy, Martin's interactions with devils and angels, emperors and common-folk. The consistent temporal signposts suggest to the reader forward movement in the narrative world of the text; they suggest a march of time towards one logical end: this *Life*—like its models—will conclude with a death.

Such an end does not however come. Sulpicius thwarts his readers' so carefully cultivated expectations. Martin's is a life interrupted, his inevitable death postponed. Sulpicius declares his text finished well before the saint's death, finished in fact just at the point in the narrative where the saint and his hagiographer meet for the first time. As written by Sulpicius, the holy Martin overfills the narrative space, his actions too great to be encompassed in a single work. But perhaps even more vexing is that Sulpicius—upon declaring an end to his work—just keeps

³¹ *VM* 2. 1-3.

³² The vision is recounted at *VM* 3.3-4. The scene outside the gates occurs just before, *VM* 3.1-2.

³³ Chapters regularly begin with such formulations as “not long after that” or “at about the same time” or some such phrase. These include *VM* 3.1, “quodam itaque tempore”; 3.3, “nocte igitur insecuta”; 4.1, “interea”; 8.1, “nec multo post”; 9.1, “sub idem fere tempus”; 12.1, “accidit autem insequenti tempore”; 14.1, “sub idem fere tempus”; 17.1, “eodem tempore”; 18.1, “interea cum...”. Each chapter begins with some indication of the temporal framework, consistently indicating to the reader a logical movement through time.

writing. Even before Sulpicius appends a supplement to the *Life*, before he writes a letter or a dialogue, the *Life* itself offers its own sort of supplement. For, though he has now finished describing the deeds of Martin—miraculous deeds which somehow he managed to put into words³⁴—nevertheless Sulpicius will continue; nevertheless he will attempt to express the inexpressible. For, he claims that no one could possibly describe Martin’s inner life and his daily conduct or that mind of his ever intent on heaven.³⁵ Yet, this very task is just what Sulpicius seems to undertake in this (not quite final) chapter. Homer himself could not do Martin justice, Sulpicius claims: “Truly I confess that not even Homer himself, were he to ascend from the underworld, could explain it; so great were all Martin’s achievements that they could not possibly be grasped in words.”³⁶

Just as Sulpicius, in this ostensible conclusion, compares himself to Homer (no matter how flinching that comparison), so the reader will recall the first chapter of the *Life*, where Sulpicius opposes the value of a text which invokes imitation of Hector to one which invokes imitation of Martin.³⁷ We begin to see that even those literary *topoi* by which Sulpicius expresses Martin’s inexpressibility seem to repeat themselves. Indeed, with this claim, we can already sense Sulpicius doubling back on himself, repeating and re-inscribing what he has written earlier in the text. The allusion to the first sections of the *Life* stand out. In the prefatory letter to Desiderius, Sulpicius claims his own inadequacy of speech, but resolves that the virtues of

³⁴ VM 26.2, “facta illius explicari uerbis utcumque potuerunt”

³⁵ VM 26.2, “interiorem uitam illius et conuersationem cotidianam et animum caelo semper intentum nulla umquam, uere profiteor, nulla explicabit oratio.”

³⁶ VM 26.3, “Vere, fatebor, non si ipse, ut aiunt, ab inferis Homerus emergeret, posset exponere; adeo omnia maiora in Martino sunt, quam ut uerbis concipi queant.”

³⁷ VM 1.3-6.

Martin deserve a telling no matter the solecisms of language or unpolished style.³⁸ This very trope Sulpicius will repeat again later in the corpus, putting a rather similar sentiment in the mouth of Gallus, one of the three interlocutors in the dialogue which is the last of the Martinian writings. In that text, we will see that simplicity of speech itself comes to be re-inscribed as an imitation of Martin, the sort of ascetic virtue toward which a hagiographer might reasonably aspire. And so, Sulpicius' apparent apology eventually will come to be revalued as one impulse in the complex of Martinian repetitions we have begun to trace.

And, still in that first chapter of the *Life*, Sulpicius adduces not just the inadequacy of his language but the absolute impossibility of recounting Martin's life sufficiently. "In no way," he writes "could I get at all of his deeds."³⁹ Sulpicius gives three reasons why this should be so. First, Martin in his humility tried to hide his virtues.⁴⁰ Second, Sulpicius has omitted a great number of his deeds, assuming it enough to record only his most impressive powers.⁴¹ And finally, the reader, Sulpicius fears, might suffer *fastidium* were he to tell every last one of Martin's deeds.⁴² In the end, however, it is not the reader, but rather Sulpicius himself who grows weary. The author takes up this conceit from the first chapter of the *Life* and revises it, ostensibly as a means of formulating what should be his conclusion. "Now my book demands its end, my discourse must be finished, not because all those things which should be said of Martin have been exhausted, but because I, like inexpert poets grown negligent at the end of their work,

³⁸ *VM* praef. 1, "sermo incultior"; praef. 5, "Ego enim cum primum animum ad scribendum appuli, quia nefas putarem tanti uiri latere uirtutes, apud me ipse decidi ut soleismis non erubescerem."

³⁹ *VM* 1.7, "nequaquam ad omnia illius potuerim peruenire."

⁴⁰ *VM* 1.7.

⁴¹ That is, his *excellencia*; *VM* 1.8.

⁴² *VM* 1.8.

succumb, crushed by the burden of my subject matter.”⁴³ So Sulpicius calls for an end to this *Life*, but there follows on that end a *uita* of a new sort, one that describes not the *facta* but the *uita interior* of Martin. And no matter how apparently inexpressible, the sentences which follow do make some attempt—however meager by the author’s own reckoning—to do just that. Sulpicius here outlines Martin’s ascetic feats; his abstinence from food and from sleep; his ceaseless prayer; his patience and his generosity, even to those who would revile him.⁴⁴ Sulpicius describes that indescribable inner life, if briefly, and thereby adds the first of many supplements to a hagiographical corpus that will only grow.

But even with such a (seemingly final) description in the books, so to speak, Sulpicius still continues, offering a sort of readers’ guide at the text’s very conclusion. By now, Sulpicius has at length recounted the deeds of Martin; he has declared a final end to this work; at last he will put down his pen, but again only after he offers an ostensibly foolproof hermeneutical strategy for any who would read of Martin. Sulpicius first remarks on those who “hated in him what they did not see in themselves.”⁴⁵ In fact, Sulpicius explicitly situates this hatred in the inability of Martin’s detractors to imitate him.⁴⁶ These people—some even bishops⁴⁷—will be easily identified by their reaction upon reading this *Life*. All the better if one should read and simply blush; but if he grows angry, he will have confessed his place among these

⁴³ VM 26.1, “Sed iam finem liber postulat, sermo claudendus est, non quod omnia, quae de Martino fuerint dicenda, defecerint, sed quia nos, ut inertes poetae extremo in opere neclegentes, uicti materiae mole succumbimus.”

⁴⁴ VM 26.4-27.2

⁴⁵ VM 27.3, “qui in illo oderant quod in se non uidebant”.

⁴⁶ VM 27.3, “et quod imitari non ualebant.”

⁴⁷ VM 27.3, “Atque, o nefas dolendum et ingemiscendum, non alii fere insectatores eius, licet pauci admodum, non alii tamen quam episcopi ferebantur.”

obtrectatores.⁴⁸ These men who hate Martin because they cannot be like him, cannot imitate him, they are sure to react angrily to such a text as this. On the other hand, those who would not just read but would actually believe Sulpicius' work—and, by implication I suggest, those who would take seriously the author's injunctions to imitate Martin⁴⁹—they will have a reward from God.⁵⁰ The phrase used here (*a Deo praemium*) repeats exactly the wording Sulpicius had used to describe the reward he expects for writing this *Life*.⁵¹ It is a work written, Sulpicius attests here in the conclusion as in the introduction, as absolute truth.⁵² Indeed, Sulpicius is unflinching about the veracity of his work, no matter how improbable, a veracity which in fact becomes for him all the more essential because of that very improbability.⁵³

And so, Sulpicius, long after ending his narrative, has continued to supplement his work. The first supplement serves as a sort of literary doubling, recounting not Martin's *Life*—that is to say, his deeds—but his inner life, and beginning with the same inexpressibility *topoi* he used at the very outset of the *Life* proper. The second supplementary section is yet one step further removed from narrative, inasmuch as it comments directly on the work just finished. It becomes essentially a guide for how to read the text, a text which of course has presumably already been

⁴⁸ *VM* 27.4, "Sufficiet ut, si qui ex his haec legerit et agnouerit, erubescat. Nam si irascitur, de se dictum fatebitur, cum fortasse nos de aliis senserimus."

⁴⁹ The primary purpose in writing the *Life* is to provide an example to others: *VM* 1.6, "uitam sanctissimi uiri exemplo aliis mox futuram."

⁵⁰ *VM* 27.7, "paratumque, ut spero, habebit a Deo praemium, non quicumque legerit, sed quicumque

⁵¹ *VM* 1.6, "aeternum a Deo praemium exspectemus."

⁵² *VM* 27.7, "Ego mihi conscius sum me, rerum fide et amore Christi impulsus ut scriberem, manifesta exposuisse, uera dixisse." *Cf.* 1.9, "Obsecro autem eos qui lecturi sunt, ut fidem dictis adhibeant, neque me quicquam nisi conpertum et probatum scripsisse arbitrentur; alioquin tacere quam falsa dicere maluisssem."

⁵³ *cf.* Burrus, 92-3.

read. These supplements thus become the first indication of a life still in the process of being written, still in the process of being read. Sulpicius seems to tell himself and the reader: there is much left to write and to read; this is how—that is, both truthfully and credibly—we should go about it.

Indeed, we see that throughout the Martinian corpus Sulpicius is constantly resisting narrative closure. In the second letter, to Aurelius, Sulpicius stops only because he has run out of space on his page.⁵⁴ In the *Gallus*, the conversation only ends when the interlocutors run out of daylight;⁵⁵ there, Sulpicius even makes explicit the inexpressible extent of Martin's virtue. Martin, it becomes clear, always exceeds the limits of Sulpicius' writing, ever refuses to be contained within the bounds of a text. And so, Sulpicius must keep writing. The author has devised for himself a compositional structure, indeed a narrative world, which constantly admits of addition, of repetition and re-definition.

That need for supplementation allows Sulpicius to define readerly expectations, allows him to manage the experience of his readers and set the terms on which they encounter the text. By writing a text which not only admits of but truly demands a sequel, Sulpicius provides himself the opportunity of exploring the extent to which ascetic imitation might be reflected in the reading and writing, the re-reading and re-writing, of hagiography. Though of course a sequel or supplement might accept myriad purposes, in what remains of this chapter we will see clearly that Sulpicius uses his Martinian re-writings for just such a task as I have suggested; we will see that Sulpicius constructs a text which imagines the possibility of perpetual discourse on Martin,

⁵⁴ *ep.* 2.18, “Simul iam pagina inpleta non recipit.”

⁵⁵ *G* 3.17.1, “Tum ego, cum iam adesse uesterum occiduo sole sentirem: — “Dies, inquam, abiit, Postumiane, surgendum est; simul studiosis auditoribus cena debetur. De Martino autem exspectare non debes ut ulla sit meta referenti: latius ille diffunditur quam ut ullo ualeat sermone concludi.”

discourse which might offer salvation to those who read and who write the life of this holy man into their own.

The subsequent movement from *Life* to letters is marked by an apparent devolution of narrative structure. The *Life* begins straightforwardly and continues just so, one deed of Martin following the next according to a logical order. When, however, that order is subverted and the paratactic structure of the narrative is abandoned, Sulpicius delays the *Life's* expected end beyond the bounds of the work.

The three letters which follow the *Life* then become an extended play at postponement. All three in some way or another address Martin's death, but often obscurely or through a mediating device. The first letter suggests to its reader just the possibility of the saint's death, depicting Martin trapped in a fire and without any means of escape. But this is merely an almost-death: Martin's prayers extinguish the flames. The second letter offers a vision of Martin's death before cataloguing a series of exemplary deaths, which the saint did not himself suffer, but which he may as well have, according to Sulpicius. The third letter begins with Sulpicius addressing a reader who demands at last an account of Martin's actual death. After some playful scolding, Sulpicius agrees, noting first that Martin had long known the period of his eventual death.⁵⁶ But, Sulpicius' account of it does not come so easily even still. Before he narrates Martin's death, Sulpicius recounts the saint's journey to a not-so-nearby church and reports a miracle performed on the road. Then, when Martin had accomplished the purpose of his journey and had tarried for some time at the church, he sensed his health failing him. Yet even after all these preliminaries, Sulpicius stages a sort of debate over Martin's death. The bishop's brethren beg that he remain longer with them; Martin, though conflicted, gives himself over to God's will. Sulpicius

⁵⁶ *ep.* 3.6, "Martinus igitur obitum suum longe ante praesciuit".

exclaims: “O man, whom no language can describe, unconquered by toil, and unconquerable even by death, who showed no personal preference for either alternative, and who neither feared to die nor refused to live!”⁵⁷ Still Martin lingers feverishly for a few days,⁵⁸ his death subject to seemingly endless delay. Finally, though, Sulpicius acquiesces. Martin speaks his last words and Sulpicius writes the words he had so long postponed: “With that utterance, therefore, [Martin] returned his spirit to heaven.”⁵⁹

But, just as the *Life* began with the possibilities of representing and commemorating the saint, so this account of Martin's death ends. The final section of this third letter describes the funerary rites performed for the saint, measuring them against a triumph. Martin's body is accompanied not by the conquered, but rather by those who themselves conquered the world;⁶⁰ Martin is applauded not by a mob, but by divine psalms and heavenly hymns;⁶¹ Martin is received not into Tartarus but into the bosom of Abraham, a pauper on earth who enters heaven as a rich man.⁶²

Episode and Digression in the *Gallus*

⁵⁷ *ep.* 3. 14, “O uirum ineffabilem, nec labore uictum nec morte uincendum, qui in nullam se partem pronior inclinauerit, nec mori timuerit nec uiuere recusarit!”

⁵⁸ *ep.* 3.14, “per aliquot dies”.

⁵⁹ *ep.* 3.17, “Cum hac ergo uoce spiritum caelo reddidit.”

⁶⁰ *ep.* 3.21, “Ducant illi prae curribus suis uinctos post terga captiuos; Martini corpus hi, qui mundum ductu illius uicerant prosequuntur.”

⁶¹ *ep.* 3.21, “Illos confusis plausibus populorum honoret insania; Martino diuinis plauditur psalmis, Martinus hymnis caelestibus honoratur.”

⁶² *ep.* 3.21, “Illi post triumphos suos in tartara saeua trudentur; Martinus Abrahae sinu laetus excipitur, Martinus pauper et modicus caelum diues ingreditur.”

The *Gallus* follows nearly ten years after Sulpicius has written Martin's death and burial. This literary dialogue presents a conversation over two days and between three interlocutors, Sulpicius and his friends Gallus and Postumianus. The three characters take up as the subject of their discussion those powers—*virtutes*—which Christ manifests in his servants, first the monks of the eastern deserts and second Martin, bishop of Tours. The text frames this conversation within a setting introduced initially by the voice of an external narrator, namely Sulpicius (referring to himself as *ego*). In the *Gallus*, the reader encounters two distinct levels of narrative: the external frame, in which Sulpicius is narrator and the three interlocutors (including the character of Sulpicius) are actors and speakers; likewise, a concurrent internal narrative frame, in which the three interlocutors (Postumianus and Gallus, in particular) themselves narrate accounts of Martin and the desert saints, who function therein as the primary actors.

Understood within this narrative framework, then, the text at its simplest consists in three *orationes perpetuae*. The first and longest of the three occupies the first half of the first day, as measured by the passing of time in the outermost narrative frame. In this speech (conventionally labeled the first of three books in the dialogue), Postumianus recounts at length his journey to the deserts of the east, his encounters with the monks there, and the stories he heard from them. In the second *oratio perpetua*, which fills the second part of that first day, Gallus (at the urging of his interlocutors) satisfies the demand for more miracles and sayings of Martin, so as to add to those already compiled by Sulpicius in his *Life* and letters. That section of dialogue (the second book in Fontaine's critical edition) ends when, as the sun is setting on the day, a domestic interrupts the literary idyll the three interlocutors had been composing. That servant had come to announce the arrival at the gates of a fellow-monk and partisan of Martin, a certain Refrigerius.

The three interlocutors thus make a temporary end to their dialogue and retire for the night. The monk's evening advent portends however the events of the following morning, when a *turba monachorum* (accompanied too by layfolk noble and common) press for entrance into their company. They had heard that Martin was the topic of conversation. The final *oratio perpetua* (the third and shortest of the books) begins therefore on the morning of the second day, Gallus basically picking up where he left off the previous evening, though with a markedly larger audience. He continues to pile the account of one miraculous deed upon the other, in a display of unceasing narrative abundance. Gallus' growing collection of salutary tales ends only when the press of night demands it. In fact, Postumianus is just asking after another anecdote when Sulpicius interrupts him, pointing to the sinking sun and declaring the day over. A Martinian narrative is inevitably abounding, as Sulpicius' character makes explicit. Nearly the last we hear of Martin in the text is Sulpicius' avowal: "There is no point in waiting for someone to reach an end when talking about Martin. He spreads too widely to be bound by the limits of any conversation."⁶³

In fact, we see that such ostensibly natural conversation, with its concomitant potential for unstructured, even endless, discourse is particularly suitable for comprehending Martin as fully as possible. Unlike biography, a genre seemingly bounded by a fundamentally teleological structure (though even this basic tenet Sulpicius ignores, or at least avoids), dialogue seems to admit readily of anecdote and episode, digression and interruption. Or rather, we might better say that dialogue *as Sulpicius writes it* consistently displays such narrative tendencies. A conversation can very well last for days, as this one does.

⁶³ *G* 3.17.1, "De Martino autem exspectare non debes ut ulla sit meta referenti: latius ille diffunditur quam ut ullo ualeat sermone concludi."

If the *Life* and the letters in some way represent a meditation on the end of Martin's life, then the *Gallus* dramatizes the possibilities of a literary afterlife unbounded by temporal parameters,⁶⁴ rendering a discursive world in which Martin's deeds can be told ever and again. The *Life* and the letters make a literary play at postponement, depicting the saint's ability to defer death and displaying conspicuously the author's ability to write a *Life* beyond the bounds of biography.⁶⁵ This natural limit is, however, kept in constant view, and the dialectic of delay and acknowledged inevitability finally occasions an absurdly comic exchange between Sulpicius and his mother-in-law, an exchange which induces the author at last to write the end of Martin's life. In the third and final letter, even this very end is drawn out at length: that retinue of monks which surrounds Martin begs him to tarry still on this earth, a plea which seems to be a reflection of Sulpicius' persistent literary deferrals. The author does depict yet more delay. Martin dies nonetheless. But with the *Gallus*, written some ten years later, Sulpicius finds the means of

⁶⁴ Cf. Tim Whitmarsh, *Narrative and Identity in the Ancient Greek Novel: Returning Romance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), especially Chapter 6, "Limen", 214-252.

⁶⁵ Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967) explains the importance of closure (and its postponement) to the function of narrative. Of particular relevance here is his discussion of *peripeteia*, which marks a sort of reversal of narrative expectations, 18ff. This unexpected (and therefore aesthetically pleasing) subversion of a rigid narrative form is, in Kermode's understanding, one means by which authors assert their creative power over the texts they create. The problems of closure have been given some little attention by scholars of ancient literature. In addition to the Whitmarsh cited above, worth particular mention is Deborah H. Roberts, Francis M. Dunn and Robert Fowler, eds. *Classical Closure: Reading the End in Greek Literature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997). The most relevant essay is Christopher Pelling, "Is Death the End? Closure in Plutarch's *Lives*," 228-50, which considers the tendency of Plutarch's biographies to extend beyond the death of the subject. This is, of course, the very opposite practice of Sulpicius' narrative postponement in the Martinian corpus. Likewise important on the topic is Don Fowler, *Roman Constructions: Readings in Postmodern Latin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), which collects a series of essays—some previously published—on literary issues in ancient Latin texts. Most relevant to my discussion of Sulpicius' narrative postponement are the three essays on closure, "Postmodernism, Romantic Irony, and Classical Closure," 5-34; "First Thoughts on Closure: Problems and Prospects," 239-83; "Second Thoughts on Closure," 284-308 (which was originally published in Roberts, et al., *Classical Closure*).

rendering this death meaningless in narrative terms; he finds the means of re-animating Martin, not in body of course, but in this still expanding literary corpus. Though Martin has died, discourse on the saint can continue without end. The *Gallus*, by the peculiarities of its narrative structure, will dramatize the boundlessness of Martin and Martin-directed literary practice.

Of course, at the outset of the text there is no explicit indication that the conversation here depicted will ever eventually address Martin at all. We read that the interlocutor Gallus reminds Sulpicius of Martin, having been one of the saint's disciples;⁶⁶ however, that character's presence (and by extension Martin's) is quickly obscured by the arrival of a certain Postumianus, a dear friend just returned from his travels in the eastern deserts. Sulpicius himself a character requests an *historia peregrinationis*. Postumianus obliges and the text at first reads like a monastic travelogue, somewhat reminiscent of the nearly contemporary *Historia Monachorum* and evincing no obvious occupation with the deeds of Martin.

But, even at this point, we see that Sulpicius has made some innovation on his previous attempts at writing holy men: the narrative of saintly deeds—depicting not a single *Life* but a collection of interlocking anecdotes about multiple monks—is rendered in an essentially episodic structure, one constantly interrupted and diverted. We might explain this by adducing the apparent demands of the subject: a text which depicts numerous holy men will naturally exhibit a sort of episodic or anecdotal structure, it seems reasonable to suggest. But, the constant shifting of subject in the internal narrative is punctuated by the dialogic interruptions of the interlocutors in the outermost narrative frame. Indeed, the dialogue form creates conditions suitable for the sort of structural divagation which is engendered by multiple and in some ways competing authorial voices within the narrative world of the text. In a series of interruptions, which Jacques

⁶⁶ *G* 1.1.1, “propter Martini memoriam.”

Fontaine has termed *intermèdes gaulois*, Postumianus' interlocutors regularly interrupt and redirect the conversation. These passages we will consider individually and in much greater detail below;⁶⁷ for now, suffice it to say that those sections I earlier described as *orationes perpetuae* are in fact sequences of multiple episodes, linked somewhat tenuously by the movement of Postumianus' eastward travels and divided by the regular intrusions of the dialogue's other interlocutors. There should therefore be no basis for explaining away the text's episodic structure as a natural function of its subject. Indeed, this narrative tendency continues—is in fact heightened—when the text does finally shift from collective biography to an account of Martin's singular *uirtus*. Gallus' narrative undermines the basic teleological assumptions of biography: it begins *in medias res*, at some middle point in Martin's life, and continues not according to an obvious chronological order, but seemingly at random, one anecdote obliquely suggesting the next.

The episode with which the character Gallus begins his account of Martin reflects the author's self-conscious engagement with the potential of recursive narrativity. For, though its place in Martin's life is intermediate, even chronologically indeterminate, its significance in the context of Sulpicius' literary project is explicitly foregrounded. For, Gallus' first anecdote about Martin is a sort of double of the saint's famous encounter with a pauper outside the gates at Amiens. Indeed, the entire series of episodes with which Gallus begins his account is linked not by chronology nor even by theme, but rather by the common tendency to repeat and re-inscribe the most famous deeds of Sulpicius' earlier *Life*. In addition to this reduplicated act of charity, Gallus tells of miraculous healings and even another resurrection.⁶⁸ Though in a *capitatio*

⁶⁷ See Chapter III below, especially the section "Dialogue as Interruption and Interpretation: Understanding the *intermèdes gaulois*."

⁶⁸ Referring respectively to *VM* 16 and *VM* 7-8.

benevolentiae, Gallus makes explicit his intention to avoid repeating what Sulpicius has already written of Martin, his narrative begins with a sort of condensed re-imagining of the most famous deeds from the *Life*. Such repetition immediately structures a narrative which admits of constant re-telling. Martin's miraculous *uirtus* as Sulpicius has described it engenders ever more miracles and the subsequent discourse necessary to describe them.

Running counter to this reduplicative tendency is the recurring sense in the dialogue that one exemplary episode or one particular series of exemplary episodes ought to satisfy the desires of the audience. The few ought to stand in for the many. So Postumianus claims, when he has finished his narrative: "Let it be enough for you to know these things about the virtues of the Lord, virtues which he has accomplished in his servants either for the purpose of imitation or of avoidance."⁶⁹ As recompense for so satisfying his interlocutors, Postumianus asks to hear more of Martin.⁷⁰ The character Sulpicius immediately picks up on this notion of sufficiency: "Was my book not enough for you?"⁷¹ And here we mark a fundamental difference about Martinian narrative: it is never enough; never can one text fully comprehend that holy man. Postumianus replies, "This task was given me by many monks, that if ever I should return to this country and

⁶⁹ 1.22.5, "Haec uos de uirtutibus Domini, quas in seruis suis uel imitanda operatus est uel timenda, scire sufficiat."

⁷⁰ 1.22.6, "Sed quia satisfeci uestris auribus, immo etiam uerbosior fui fortasse quam debui, tu modo ad me loquebatur debitum faenus exsolue, ut te de Martino tuo, ut es solitus, plura referentem, iam pridem in hoc desideriis meis aestuantibus, audiamus."

⁷¹ 1.23.1, "Quid? Inquam, tibi de Martino meo liber ille non sufficit, quem ipse tu nosti me de illius uita atque uirtutibus edidisse?"

find you well, I should compel you to supply those particulars about the virtues of the blessed man which you claimed to pass over in that book of yours.”⁷²

And indeed, Gallus having been chosen to tell of these overlooked episodes adduces a similar tendency. He recounts a spectacular series of holy and miraculous deeds, then claims: “Already I have narrated so many things to you that my discourse ought to have satisfied your desires.”⁷³ It has not, of course. “But because I cannot disregard your will, I will speak for what remains of the day.”⁷⁴ This makes the point even more explicitly, in that Gallus recognizes his inability to fully comprehend Martin in speech: his only limit is the setting sun.

It is with this declaration that the narrative reins in Gallus’ account are completely loosed: the possibility of sufficient speech having been precluded, Gallus’ subsequent narrative reproduces a discourse of abundance. Each episode suggests the next only obliquely, and the series evinces no constraining pattern, whether chronological or otherwise. One miracle is heaped on the next. This random parataxis dominates Gallus’ narrative in the dialogue’s second book. The result is a text which depicts a sort of endless middle to Martin’s life, its telling not limited by the traditional constraints of biographical literature. Sulpicius, having already written Martin’s death, is free to write a narrative without the structuring principles demanded by a proper ending. The narrator Gallus jumps from one story to the next, each quite literally an

⁷² 1.23.7, “a multis fratribus haec mihi iniuncta legatio est, ut, si umquam terras istas te incolumi contigissem, eat e supplere compellerem, quae in illo tuo libro de uirtutibus beati uirir professus es praeterisse.”

⁷³ 2.8.5, “Iam quidem uobis, inquit, tanta narraui ut satisfacere studiis uestris meus sermo debuerit.”

⁷⁴ 2.8.5, “Sed quia uoluntati uestrae non obsecundare mihi non licet, quantum adhuc diei superses loquar.”

episode (in the etymological sense), a sort of sidetrack that “join[s] the main route from an unexpected angle”.⁷⁵

The series of passages which ends the second book demonstrates this episodic arrangement quite explicitly. When Gallus agrees to speak for what remains of the day, he notices straw beds being prepared for the three interlocutors (2.8). This suggests to him a story about Martin and blessed straw. The story which follows happened “around the same time” as that which preceded it (2.9). This story about a demonic cow seemingly suggests another animal story (2.9). That pair of animal stories is followed by sayings of Martin, themselves illustrated by animal parables (2.10). The last of these sayings is a long parable about virginity, fornication and marriage (2.10), which occasions a story about a monk who wants to live in celibate companionship with his wife (2.11). The conclusion to this episode is an aphorism about the separation of men from women in the monastic life (2.11). That saying naturally suggests the highest example of sequestered virginity experienced by Martin: the committed virgin who refused even to see the holy man himself (2.12). Gallus so highly praises her virginity because it is said that even angels would discourse with Martin. The preceding occasions a discussion of Martin’s visitation with angels (2.13). The miraculous result of this is Martin’s ability to prophesy future events (2.13). As the sun finally sets, conversation proceeds in turn to Martin’s visions of the Apocalypse (2.14). It is with this subject that the conversation will end for the day, a coincidence which seems almost to suggest a correspondence between the furthest extremes of historical time and the final limits of Martinian discourse.

Really what constrains Gallus’ speech is the arrival of a servant boy. In the very midst of his speech, Gallus is interrupted. He had yet to finish what he set out to relate, when there

⁷⁵ Whitmarsh, *Narrative and Identity*, 235.

entered a boy from the household. This servant is decidedly out of place, a disturbing presence who does in fact derail the discussion. Of course, the unexpected entrance of uninvited guests, slaves and other such characters is not so unexpected given the generic context. We naturally think of the sudden and disruptive entrance of Alcibiades, flute-girl on his arm and surrounded by revelers, in Plato's *Symposium* (212c ff.). Though perhaps the *coup de théâtre* is here less dramatic, still it marks a dramatic change in context and sudden end to discourse. For the boy announces that the priest Refrigerius is standing at the door. His looming presence immediately cools the conversation. The participants are unsure: should they keep listening to Gallus or attend to their friend outside? Gallus himself makes the decision for them, adducing the approach of night: "Even if not on account of the arrival of that most holy priest, we would have had to leave off this speech, for night compels to finish the discourse so far advanced. Though in no way has it been possible to tell everything about Martin's virtues, this will have to be enough for today."⁷⁶ The only limits to discourse on Martin are external constraints: the setting sun sinks any possibility of further conversation.

This is a not uncommon topos among ancient authors for bringing a text (or some section thereof) to its close Cicero's *de Oratore* does similar.⁷⁷ And again, on the second day of conversation in the *Gallus*, the narrative on Martin is bound not by internal concerns, rather only by the passing of time in the uppermost level of the text.⁷⁸ But acknowledging this as a literary

⁷⁶ 2.14.7-8, "Etiam si non ob aduentum sanctissimi sacerdotis relinquenda nobis haec esset oratio, nox ipsa cogebat hucusque prolatum finire sermonem. Verum quia de Martini uirtutibus nequaquam explicari uniuersa potuerunt, haec uos hodie audisse sufficiat."

⁷⁷ Cic., *de Orat.*, III, 209.

⁷⁸ *G* 3.17.1, "Dies, inquam, abitt, Postumiane, surgendum est; simul studiosis auditoribus cena debetur."

commonplace—and perhaps one especially suited to dialogue⁷⁹—allows us to see the possibilities that this particular genre and this particular trope might offer Sulpicius in his depiction of Martin. Sulpicius makes explicit the fact that no narrative can contain Martin; no speech is enough to represent him fully; there can be no end to any discussion of him.⁸⁰ Attempts to comprehend Martin in speech and in literature are by definition endless. In his literary afterlife, the possibility of closure is denied outright. There is always cause for still more narrative.

Writing and Reading a Saint

We have thus seen that the *Gallus* sets the terms of a literary project which admits constantly of addition, a project that (out of necessity) ends but without bringing the narrative to any definitive close. But what might Sulpicius accomplish by so characterizing his task? Of course, there is the obvious argument that Martin cannot be comprehended in narrative because his virtues are simply too numerous to be contained within a single text or even a series of texts. Even after Gallus has for a day and a half recounted Martin's deeds, his audience is left wanting more.⁸¹ This is the most explicit effect of such attestations of abundance. I would suggest, however, that there is something more to this characterization. For, Sulpicius makes a point of describing the benefits which redound to those who would write, read and discuss a saint like Martin.

⁷⁹ Curtius, in his treatment of concluding *topoi* in ancient literature, points out that this is a technique that "befits only an outdoor conversation," *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. W.R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 90.

⁸⁰ *G* 3.17.1, "De Martino autem expectare non debes ut ulla sit meta referenti: latius ille diffunditur quam ut ullo ualeat sermone concludi."

⁸¹ *G* 3.16.4, "ad Martinum nostrum, Galle, redeamus."

Even before the *Life* begins to tell Martin's biography, we find some indication that this will be a work which addresses something more than just the saint's life and his deeds. Of course, biographical narrative inevitably begins with the saint's birth: "Martin was born at Sabaria in Pannonia."⁸² These are not however the first words we read in the *Life*. Though such a sentence naturally signals the beginning of Martin's own life, the text itself starts on rather different footing, not indeed with the holy man but with the hagiographer. The first words we read explicitly address the difficulties inherent to the project of writing hagiography.

There is of course a temptation to treat the preface and first chapter which precede the ostensibly natural beginning as somehow paratextual, as secondary to the life which Sulpicius begins at the section marked as chapter two in modern editions. For, these very first sections treat the figure of Martin only tangentially, addressing instead the quality of Sulpicius' own writing, the pressure he felt to publish the text, and finally his motives for writing the *Life* at all. A reader of late ancient and medieval hagiography will readily recognize in such tropes a not atypical *captatio benevolentiae*, one which relies on an openly professed practice of *sermo humilis*.⁸³ In his prefatory letter to Desiderius, Sulpicius begins: "I had decided, my like-minded brother, to conceal in its parchment and confine within the walls of this house the little treatise I had written on the life of St. Martin. This was because I am very sensitive by nature and was evading men's

⁸² VM 2.1, "Igitur Martinus Sabaria Pannoniarum oppido oriundus facit."

⁸³ The still standard treatment of this is in Auerbach, *Literary Language and its Public in Late Latin Antiquity and in the Middle Ages*, trans. Ralph Mannheim (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 25-66. Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, 407-13, also addresses the use of this *topos*.

judgments, lest (as I expect) my rather unrefined language should displease my readers.”⁸⁴ But, with the *Life of Martin* standing so near the beginning of the still nascent tradition of Latin hagiographical literature, we would be wrong to dismiss these two apparent prefaces as mere commonplace. What is more, even if we were to trace a series of compelling literary precedents,⁸⁵ we would have to ask what particular purpose they serve for Sulpicius in his *Life of Martin*. What we begin to see is a text that is self-consciously literary, a text that explicitly appraises the role of the author.

These sections, their prominent placement, indicate another underlying concern of the Martinian corpus, namely the relationship between literary activity and hope for salvation:

“So, it seems to me that I will accomplish something worthwhile, if I write the life of a most holy man to serve in the future as an example to others, a man who will stir readers to true knowledge, to heavenly warfare and divine virtue. In this, we consider also our own advantage: that we may look forward to not a vain remembrance among men, but an eternal reward from God.”⁸⁶

Here, before any account of Martin's life is even begun, Sulpicius promises a text, which accomplishes some salvific end for those who would participate in its production and its consumption. The practice of writing and the practice of reading about Martin will serve, Sulpicius suggests, an ultimately salvific purpose.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ *VM praef.*1, "Ego quidem, frater unanimis, libellum quem de uita sancti Martini scripseram, scheda sua premere et intra domesticos perietes cohibere decreueram, quia, ut sum natura infirmissimus, iudicia humana uitabam, ne, quod fore arbitror, serm incultior legentibus displiceret."

⁸⁵ The *Life of Anthony*, for example, does begin with a preface that addresses Athanasius' motives for writing.

⁸⁶ *VM* 1.6, "Vnde facturus mihi operae pretium uideor, si uitam sanctissimi uiri, exemplo aliis mox futuram, perscripsero, quo utique ad ueram sapientiam et caelestem militiam diuinamque uirtutem legentes incitabantur. In quo ita nostri quoque rationem commodi ducimus, ut non inanem ab hominibus memoriam, sed aeternum a Deo praemium exspectemus."

⁸⁷ cf. Krueger's observations on Greek hagiographical literature, *Writing and Holiness*, 95-96 and *passim*.

In his second letter, Sulpicius further advances the notion that the act of writing and reading hagiographical literature is a means of making the saint present, a means of obtaining his intercession. By writing Martin, Sulpicius renders the saint explicitly present to himself and to his readers. "He will not be absent from us, believe me, he will not be absent. He will be present among us as we discuss him, he will stand beside those who pray."⁸⁸ Sulpicius so consoles his addressee at the thought of Martin's death, asserting that literary reproductions will allow the writer and his readers to experience still the saint's presence.

In the third letter, Sulpicius still more clearly foregrounds the experience of reading, even dramatizes the extent to which readers determine the message of the text. Sulpicius writes his addressee a generative role in the creation of Martin's life in letters: "I shall satisfy your wish with a few words".⁸⁹ The end of Martin's life—as represented by Sulpicius—is shown to be the result of a union between writer and reader both. Indeed, that union is instrumental because it also serves to produce those benefits which accrue to those who would read and truly understand Martin. "From heaven, I trust, as a guardian he looks down upon me while I write these things and you as you read them."⁹⁰ The joint practice of reading and writing serves to occasion saintly intercession. This letter underscores the extent of Bassula's reading and her associated zeal. Sulpicius makes clear that the result of such reading is the opportunity to participate in Martin's intercession.

Sulpicius' readers, before coming to the *Gallus*, are made fully aware of the possibilities of writing and reading about Martin. The shared literary project of author and audience is one

⁸⁸ *ep.* 2.16, "Non deerit nobis ille, mihi crede, non deerit: intererit de se sermocinantibus, adstabit orantibus."

⁸⁹ *ep.* 3.5, "paucis tuae satisfaciam uoluntati."

⁹⁰ *ep.* 3.21, "Illinc nos, ut spero, custodiens me haec scribentem respicit, te legentem."

means, perhaps their only means, of obtaining salvation. In this context, it becomes easier to see the necessity—for the author and his audience even more than his subject—of writing Martin an afterlife in literature. An unbounded narrative constantly admits of more literary production. There will always be the need for further discussion of Martin; there will always be more opportunities to seek his guardianship and to obtain the potentially salvific benefits of writing the deeds of this holy man. What is more, such a narrative, as Sulpicius represents it, invites multiple participants. The reader assumes a particularly important role in this project, and the character Gallus especially suggests the possibilities of participatory reading. In the next two chapters, we will trace Sulpicius' representation of his audience across the Martinian corpus, coming to see how the shared project of author and audience is subsumed in the figure of Gallus, who is represented as an ideal reader and eventually an ideal author.

Chapter II

(RE)READING MARTIN: GENRE AND THE READER IN THE *LIFE* AND LETTERS

The Martinian corpus not only allows for but demands supplement, consistently overfilling the traditional bounds of narrative. But what are we to make of a hagiographical corpus that traverses so many different works and so many different genres? This sort of literary (re)packaging demands explanation, for Sulpicius' project is rather unprecedented in this respect.¹ Indeed, the compositional shift from narrative biography to the letter form and then to dialogue is not one whose motives are immediately self-evident. Fontaine has explained these texts as essentially apologetic, but there is nothing which makes letters, for example, especially well-suited to the practice of apology.² Nor is the letter form, written in the first person to a second, any more or less apposite to the telling of narrative or to the practice of persuasion than a text written in the third person (as the *Life of Martin*).

I therefore build on past scholarship, which has tended to emphasize the apologetic function of these literary supplements, particularly because of its persistent focus on the figure of Martin in the context of a late ancient Gaul riven with conflict. I would not deny Fontaine and Stancliffe's shared supposition that the letters serve some apologetic function. Nevertheless, I suggest that the problem of Martin in Gaul and the apparently negative reception of Martinian

¹ We might think of Sulpicius' near-exact contemporary and sometimes epistolary correspondent, Paulinus of Nola, whose hagiographical writings on the martyr Felix extend beyond a single work. But, it is important to note that—although the biographical poems are multiple—nevertheless generic form is consistent.

² Fontaine, *Vie*, 1121. Cf. Stancliffe, *St. Martin and His Hagiographer*, who suggests that the letters "grew out of the *Vita*, completing and defending its portrayal of Martin," 83.

asceticism there are considered by Sulpicius to be problems of interpretation, problems occasioned by the inability of his audience to read as he would expect. Martin's opponents among the Gallic clergy do not know how to read his *Life*, Sulpicius suggests. The supplementary works tackle this problem and leverage the formal features of their genre to do so. In order to explain the scope of this literary program, I will attend to the interpretive relationship necessarily established between an author and his audience, to the close link which Sulpicius forges between the practice of writing and the practice of reading. I do so, in an attempt to answer those questions first posed above: why a *Life*, why the letters, why dialogue? What makes each of these genres particularly suited to Sulpicius' aims? What necessitates the change from one to the next?

I would suggest that, in the shift from narrative biography to letter form to dialogue, the role of the reader becomes all the more dramatically foregrounded within the text. In the *Life*, the audience is external to the text, a passive witness to the miraculous deeds of Martin. In the *Letters*, the primary reader is its recipient, directly addressed and explicitly invited to share in Martin's intercession. In the *Gallus*, this development is taken to its logical extreme: the primary audience to the narrative—the interlocutors—directly participate in the composition of the text, becoming authors themselves. This progression is especially compelling because Sulpicius addresses therein the task of the reader, demonstrating how, through careful engagement with the text, one might benefit from Martin's intercession: the Martinian corpus teaches its audience how best to read hagiography.

Sulpicius expects his readers to encounter the Martinian corpus as active participants, to generate meaning by supplying the proper subtext. In particular, he expects his readers to understand Martin in the context of prior *exempla*, just as he expects his readers to take this text

which reproduces Martin's life as an *exemplum* for their own. Indeed, exemplary imitation in its myriad forms is the foundation of Sulpicius' literary practice, writing and reading both. In this and subsequent chapters, it should become clear that Sulpicius' Martinian corpus proposes and even itself performs an ascetic practice at the level of reading which stresses the importance of imitation, stresses the importance of *exempla* as a guide to ethical conduct. For Sulpicius, imitation is naturally bound up in textual practice, is inherent both to the performance of reading and the performance of writing. Literary imitation, we will see, reinforces and revalues ethical imitation. In rewriting Martin again and again, Sulpicius highlights the possibilities (and also the potential pitfalls) of such an imitation.

It is not just the case that this generic progression is indicative of increased involvement from Sulpicius' audience. Rather, I argue that Sulpicius uses his texts—and especially the common discursive qualities of each genre—to represent the ideal practices of a model reader and, moreover, to suggest the potential results of such a practice. Sulpicius shows his readers how to read by writing readers into his texts. I demonstrate that the genres in which he writes are fundamental to this task, allowing Sulpicius the opportunity to give exemplary readers space in the narrative as he writes it. In this chapter, I address especially the movement from *Life* to letters, interrogating the features of epistolary discourse that allow Sulpicius to foreground the role of the reader in the corpus. In the next chapter, I will return to the *Gallus* and examine the possibilities of dialogue.

Finding the Reader in the *Life of Martin*

To advance this thesis is not to suppose, however, that the figure of the reader is wholly absent from the *Life*. In fact, from the very beginning of this corpus, Sulpicius emphasizes the shared literary project of author and audience. We are even encouraged by Sulpicius to believe that the work in our hands may never have made it there, were it not for one particularly persistent reader: Sulpicius had shrunk from publishing this "little treatise on the life of blessed Martin" out of a professed humility.³ In the brief letter which prefaces the *Life of Martin*, Sulpicius addresses Desiderius, explaining his desire to keep the work private, "confined within the walls of this house".⁴ That impulse was itself motivated by a concern for potential readers, with Sulpicius worried that his *sermo incultior* might somehow displease them.⁵ This worry is nevertheless overcome by Desiderius' repeated requests, and Sulpicius agrees to enclose the *Life*, on the

³ That this "longed-for humility" is couched in a beautifully periodic sentence seems typical of such a *captatio benevolentiae* and likewise indicative of a practice which makes claims of humility all while emphasizing the author and his craft; see Introduction above, 5-8. *VM praef.* 1, "Ego quidem frater unanims libellum quem de uita sancti Martini scripseram scheda sua premere et intra domesticos parietes cohibere decreueram quia ut sum natura infirmissimus iudicia humana uitabam ne quod fore arbitror sermo incultior legentibus displiceret omniumque reprehensionis dignissimus iudicaret, qui materiem disertis merito scriptoribus reseruandam inpudens occupassem; sed petenti tibi saepius negare non potui." In the preface, Sulpicius makes consistent use of a language of literary humility. He employs metaphors of obscuring and revealing to characterize the opposing demands of Martin's virtues (which demand revelation) and Sulpicius' literary representation of them (which ought to be suppressed). He couches this discussion in emotional terminology, in particular language of shame (*pudor*, *erubesco*). *Erubesco* is a word clearly associated in Sulpicius with the humility expected of authors and readers. Four of the word's five occurrences in the corpus describe the humility associated with writing and reading of Martin. The fifth occurrence describes the shame felt by the *comes* Avitianus in the presence of Martin; in that formulation Martin is explicitly labeled *auctor*.

⁴ *VM praef.* 1.

⁵ *ibid.*

condition that his correspondent reveal the work to no one.⁶ Of course, we know that request to have been ignored; Sulpicius had even anticipated as much.⁷

The author's response is to attempt a total erasure of his writerly persona: he asks Desiderius to suppress any record of his authorship. Sulpicius would obscure all the trappings of composition and form, so that the primary content of this *Life*, Martin and his *uirtus*, might be all the more visible. That Sulpicius fails at this specific goal is inevitable: the act of imagining and representing a sense of authorial humility seems more important than actually accomplishing it. But Sulpicius does manage—with only a few exceptions—to conceal the exigencies of literary production in the *Life*, in an apparent attempt to compose a particularly vivid representation of Martin's deeds. The exceptions are attendant especially in those passages at the beginning and end of the work—the prefatory letter, the first and last chapters—that seem almost paratextual in nature, passages that look forward to or look back on the primary content of the *Life*. In the first chapter of the *Life*, itself a sort of second preface, Sulpicius directly addresses the shared literary project of the writer and his readers. He enumerates the two goals which are at the foundation of his writing: by describing the life and virtues of so holy a man, he will inspire his readers to "true knowledge, heavenly warfare and divine virtue" in imitation of Martin;⁸ moreover, Sulpicius himself might look forward to a "reward from God".⁹

⁶ *VM* praef. 2, "Verumtamen ea tibi fiducia libellum edidi, qua nulli a te prodendum reor, quia id spopondisti."

⁷ *VM* praef. 2, "Sed uereor ne tu ei ianua sis futurus et emissus semel reuocari non queat."

⁸ *VM* 1.6, "Vnde facturus mihi operae pretium uideor, si uitam sanctissimi uiri, exemplo aliis mox futuram, perscripsero, quo utique ad ueram sapientiam et caelestem militiam diuinamque uirtutem legentes incitabuntur."

⁹ *VM* 1.6, "In quo ita nostri quoque rationem commodi ducimus, ut non inanem ab hominibus memoriam, sed aeternum a Deo praemium exspectemus."

Once Sulpicius has dispatched such writerly concerns, however, he signals to the reader in explicit terms that from this point forward Martin will be the subject. Whereas the prefatory letter began in the first person,¹⁰ and the first chapter addressed the expectations of Sulpicius' larger audience,¹¹ the *Life* proper begins in the second chapter with its primary subject clearly marked: "Igitur Martinus . . . oriundus fuit."¹² Martin is the grammatical subject, his name placed prominently in the sentence. There can be no question who will be this work's primary subject. And in fact, Sulpicius keeps to this basic formula throughout the remainder of the text, or at least very nearly so. Martin is consistently at the center of the work, the presence of Sulpicius and his assumed audience only implicit. Form completely gives way to content in the bulk of the *Life*. That is, until a somewhat strange thing happens: Sulpicius eventually enters the narrative as a character himself: "Since I, having heard of his faith, his life and his virtue, had long burned with desire for him, I undertook a pleasant journey for the purpose of seeing him."¹³ Immediately the text returns to literary concerns, to the problems of composition and interpretation. First, Sulpicius explains why and how he went about obtaining the information necessary to write of Martin.¹⁴ He then describes his discourse with Martin, before declaring an end to his work: "Just

¹⁰ *VM praef.* 1, "Seuerus Desiderio fratri carissimo. Ego quidem..."

¹¹ *VM* 1.1, "Plerique mortales..."

¹² *VM* 1.2.

¹³ *VM* 25.1, "Nam cum olim, audita fide eius, uita atque uirtute, desiderio illius aestuaremus, gratam nobis ad eum uidendum peregrinationem suscepimus."

¹⁴ *VM* 25.1, "simul, quia iam ardebat animus uitam illius scribere, partim ab ipso, in quantum ille interrogari potuit, sciscitati sumus, partim ab his qui interfuerant uel sciebant cognouimus."

as lazy poets grow careless as they approach the end of their work, so I have succumbed, conquered by the weight of my subject."¹⁵

Now that Sulpicius has declared an end to his work, he begins to postpone the inevitable, delaying the end he has just promised. The effect is very much like the preface and first chapter: the reader is made increasingly aware of Sulpicius' authorial hand. And as in the first chapter, Sulpicius' attention to matters of composition is naturally tied to his concern for proper interpretation. We have already seen that in the *Life's* final chapter, Sulpicius offers a sort of readers' guide to mark the text's ultimate conclusion.¹⁶ Those who read the work humbly and faithfully, those whose practice of interpretation mirrors Sulpicius' practice of composition, they will receive that same reward. "I am fully aware that I, having been induced to write these things by my belief in the facts and by my love of Christ, have revealed what was obvious and spoken what was true; and I trust that he will have a reward prepared for him by God, whosoever not only reads but believes these things."¹⁷ That is to say, those readers who take on faith Sulpicius' remarkable account will obtain the very same reward the author anticipates he will receive for writing the *Life*.

Here, at the end of the text, as at its beginning, the shared literary concerns of author and audience come to the fore. In what remains of this chapter and in that which follows, I argue that the generic progression of the corpus, from the *Life* to letters to dialogue, allows Sulpicius to

¹⁵ VM 26.1, "sed quia nos, ut inertes poetae extremo in opere neclegentes, uicti materiae mole succumbimus."

¹⁶ See above, 41-2.

¹⁷ VM 27.7, "Ego mihi conscius sum me, rerum fide et amore Christi impulsum ut scriberem, manifesta exposuisse, uera dixisse; paratumque, ut spero, habebit a Deo praemium, non quicumque legerit, sed quicumque crediderit."

emphasize these issues, especially because the letter and dialogue form—to varying degrees—give the reader a marked space in the narrative.

Writing to Readers: Sulpicius' Letters on the Death of Martin

At their core, these ostensibly "supplementary" letters take the act of reading as their primary focus. I argue that the letter form is particularly suited to this purpose. For, conceived most simply, what a letter does do is introduce a second person—the addressee and primary reader—into the narrative space of the text. "The epistolary form is unique in making the reader (narratee) almost as important an agent in the narrative as the writer (narrator)"¹⁸ When interpreting a letter, we external readers experience a text whose meaning is generated at least partially by the experience of some assumed internal reader, the initial recipient of the letter. One feature which marks the epistolary genre, therefore, is its tendency to foreground the act of reading and the narrative presence of the reader. Whereas in the *Life* the audience is external to the text, a passive witness to the miraculous deeds of Martin, in the letters the primary reader is its recipient, directly addressed and explicitly invited to share in Martin's intercession. This is significant for Sulpicius because in the Martinian corpus he attempts to set out a method of reading, granting the reader an essential role in constituting the text's meaning. In particular, he expects his readers to understand Martin in the context of prior *exempla*, just as he expects his readers to take this text which reproduces Martin's life as an *exemplum* for their own. The letters themselves serve as examples of how to read in an exemplary mode and demonstrate, moreover, the salvific benefits which accrue to those who would do so.

¹⁸ J.G. Altman, *Epistolarity: Approaches to a Form* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1982), 88.

If, however, we would attribute such a project to Sulpicius' *Letters*, we should be clear about what in fact makes them letters (beyond such classification in modern editions). What epistolary markers are present in each of the three texts? On what basis has this generic attribution been made? The very terms of such a question have been the subject of debate among scholars of ancient letters. The exact nature of the epistolary genre (or epistolary genres) in antiquity is far from certain, not least because of the immense variety displayed among those ancient texts commonly labeled letters. The focus of scholars has therefore been primarily taxonomic, at least until recently. Since Deissman first argued for a distinction between the authentic, historical, documentary letter (*Brief*) and the self-consciously literary letter (*Epistel*),¹⁹ what has long motivated scholarship of ancient epistolography is the binary opposition of aesthetic or literary refinement as against sincerity, authenticity, veracity.²⁰ In this binary is conveyed the common assumption which undergirds two fundamentally different approaches to the study of ancient letters. The first takes letters as implicitly documentary, as informal and therefore unmediated texts, texts whose very immediacy makes them seem natural sources for the writing of social history.²¹ A letter is here useful only inasmuch as it is not a literary

¹⁹ A. Deissman, *Light from the Ancient East*, trans. L. Strachan (New York: London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1927), 227-230.

²⁰ Cf. A. de Pretis, "'Insincerity,' 'Facts,' and 'Epistolarity': Approaches to Pliny's Epistles to Calpurnia," *Arethusa* 36 (2003): 127-46.

²¹ This approach has a long history. Cornelius Nepos (*Att.* 16.3) writes of Cicero's letters to Atticus: "sunt...sedecim volumina epistularum, ab consulatu eius usque ad extremum tempus ad Atticum missarum: quae qui legat, non multum desideret historiam contextam eorum temporum." In modern scholarship, cf. D.R. Shackleton-Bailey's commentaries on Cicero's epistolary corpora. These include *Letters to Atticus*, 7 vols. (Cambridge: CUP, 1965); *Epistulae ad Familiares*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: CUP, 1977); and, *Epistulae ad Quintum Fratrem et M. Brutum* (Cambridge: CUP, 1980); a more specific instance of this impulse is J. Nicholson, "The Delivery and Confidentiality of Cicero's Letters," *Classical Journal* 90 (1994): 33-63. On another major epistolary corpus from classical antiquity, cf. A.N. Sherwin-White, *The Letters of Pliny: A Historical and Social Commentary* (Oxford: OUP, 1966). This approach is

construction. For, a text which manifests a conscious formal or thematic programme must in this view be at remove from reality. The second approach concedes this all the same, but moves in the opposite direction, stressing not the documentary qualities of the ancient letter, but rather those generic forms and structures which define it as an inherently literary venture.²² The letters of a Cicero or a Pliny cannot but be refined, are necessarily rhetorical, and therefore (so goes the argument) must be artificial and insincere, must mediate a reality from which we as modern scholars are ultimately excluded.²³ The difficulty here lies in the supposition of some private reality hidden by a public mask, the assumption that a letter-writer's person can (and therefore must) be wholly concealed by a letter's rhetoric.

Scholars have begun to insist on a different tack, one which rejects so simple a binary.²⁴ Ancient letters, whether intended for a private audience or public, whether self-consciously fictive or straightforwardly transactional, are naturally imbued with a certain inescapable rhetoric. Responding especially to Altman's influential work on epistolary novels, scholars of ancient letters have begun to attend to the process by which those tropes peculiar to epistolary

likewise echoed in the work of Pliny's most prominent English translator, Betty Radice; cf. "The Letters of Pliny," in T.A. Dorey, ed., *Empire and Aftermath: Silver Latin II* (London: Routledge, 1975) 119-41. For more on Radice's methodological assumptions, see J. Henderson, "Portrait of the Artist as a Figure of Style: P.L.I.N.Y.'s Letters," *Arethusa* 36 (2003): 115-25.

²² Pretis, "Approaches to Pliny's Epistles," 130-4, ascribes this particular approach to G. Luck in his article, "Brief und Epistel in der Antike," *Altertum* 7 (1961): 77-84. Essential to Luck's argument is his attempt to distinguish between the letter (*der Brief*)—straightforward, non-rhetorical, unmediated, the product of man untouched by education—and the epistle (*die Epistel*)—rhetorical by definition and the only possibility for such an author as Cicero or Pliny.

²³ Even Henderson, "Portrait of the Artist," makes a similar assumption, in his insistence on the letter as constitutive of a literary programme of self-idealization.

²⁴ Exemplary here is Gunderson, "S. V. B.; E. V.," *Classical Antiquity* 26 (2007): 1-48.

discourse can be seen to construct meaning.²⁵ Altman has suggested that those typical traits of letters—salutations and valedictions, for example, but also the introduction of a second person into the text, the play between absence and presence, or the genre's tacit assumptions of reciprocity, among other features—accomplish more than simple ornamentation or literary display. Rather, they are essential vehicles for the production of meaning in the epistolary genre.

With all this having been said, it is important to recognize that, in one sense at least, Sulpicius' letters are rather different to the epistolary corpora of classical authors such as Cicero or Seneca or even of contemporaries like Paulinus or Augustine. Sulpicius' correspondence does not survive for us except in the context of the narrative of Martin's life. They number only three (four, if we count the prefatory letter to Desiderius) and have not been transmitted as part of a larger and exclusively epistolary corpus. Though we know that Sulpicius wrote other letters,²⁶ only these three have survived. They treat only Martin; in fact, their sole focus is Martin's death (its delay, its imagining, its eventuality, its repercussions). The letters form part of a larger narrative, one begun with the *Life*. They comprise a sort of postscript, or perhaps more properly a conclusion. They seem very much of a kind with the *Life*, and we might sympathize with scholars who read them as a straightforward addendum to that earlier project: the letters continue and complete the narrative of Martin's life, by telling the story of his death. At the same time, these three letters are marked out as separate from the *Life* proper. They comprise not a simple continuation of the narrative, instead postponing and delaying the life's inevitable *telos*. What is more these three letters have received that generic label for a reason. They do not simply take up the form of the *Life*, even if they do recount biographical episodes. Indeed, each of the three

²⁵ Altman, *Epistolarity*.

²⁶ The thirteen letters addressed from Paulinus to Sulpicius (*epp.* 1, 5, 11, 17, 22-24, 27-32) seem clearly to represent one half of an ongoing epistolary correspondence. Cf. Trout *Paulinus of Nola*, 212.

letters subsequent to the *Life* is its own discrete work and takes a different literary form than that text. They are marked as letters, whether by their generic markers or by descriptions found elsewhere in the corpus. In this chapter, I suggest that understanding the function of their epistolary character is essential to understanding Sulpicius' overarching literary project in the Martinian corpus.

On what basis, then, might we identify these letters as such. The first, for example, does not in any way announce itself as a letter proper, despite its designation in the manuscript tradition. The text as we have received it includes no addressee, no salutation or greeting of any kind. The absence of formal epistolary markers remains in fact a consistent feature of the text, with no intended recipient implicit anywhere. There is no you apparent in this so-called letter.²⁷ That Sulpicius nevertheless did understand this to be a letter, of some sort at least, we learn from the *Gallus*. In that dialogue, Sulpicius has Gallus call this text an *epistula* and name its recipient as a certain priest named Eusebius.²⁸ So Fontaine and Halm both title this text, *Epistula Prima Ad Eusebium*. Although the manuscripts nowhere support the “ad Eusebium” which modern editions include, nevertheless many do append the label *Epistula Prima*.²⁹ We should however attend to the fact that Eusebius is nowhere addressed in the letter; that the text reads essentially as narrative; and finally that the last sentence indicates a potentially wide readership (a fact

²⁷ Except when Sulpicius uses apostrophe to rhetorical effect, directly addressing that detractor of Martin, the “wretch himself”, whose comments have apparently necessitated Sulpicius’ writing.

²⁸ *G* 2.9.5, “Hoc illud fuit tempus quo inter medias flammas positus non sensit incendium. Quod mihi non arbitror esse referendum quia hoc plenius iste Sulpicius, licet in libro suo praeteritum, in epistula tamen postea quam ad Eusebium, tunc presbyterum, modo episcopum fecit, exposuit.”

²⁹ Halm, *Sulpicii Severi Opera* CSEL 1 (Vienna: Georg Olms Verlag, 1866), 87. Cf. also Fontaine, *Vie*, 324.

which of course does not in any way preclude the possibility of this text being a letter).³⁰ There, Sulpicius exhorts “whosoever might read these things.”³¹ Even if this Eusebius was the intended recipient to the text, Sulpicius clearly imagines a broader potential audience. Yet, it remains significant that Sulpicius does choose to call it *epistula*. Though it does not obviously read like a letter, Sulpicius makes it one by naming it so. We would be right to consider it as related to the two letters which follow.

The second of Sulpicius’ three letters is somewhat like the first in that it does not begin with the expected salutation. Again like the first letter, we can identify the recipient from a subsequent text in Sulpicius’ Martinian corpus, in this case the third letter to Bassula.³² Unlike that first letter, however, this text—addressed to the deacon Aurelius—displays many of the formal features of epistolarity; it might even be categorized within a particular subset of ancient epistolography, namely the letter of consolation.³³ The second person of the letter is consistently evident in the text; the recipient often is directly addressed and Sulpicius seems regularly to consider his situation in the writing of the text. As a result, the external reader reads through the eyes of the addressee; indeed, this Aurelius stands in for the reader (whether ancient or modern).

³⁰ W.G. Doty, “The Classification of Epistolary Literature,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 31 (1969): 183-99, discusses at length the relative levels of privacy assumed in ancient letters. His treatment is essentially taxonomic, using the assumed scope of the intended audience to differentiate one category of letter from another. On Sulpicius’ letters in particular, Fontaine *Vie*, 1121, describes them as ostensibly personal letters distributed as “lettres ouvertes”. More helpful is the more recent approach, typified by Gunderson et al. (see above, 69-71) which sees the vast majority of ancient letters as straddling such apparent divides as literary/documentary or public/private.

³¹ *ep.* 1.15, “Vnde intellegat quisquis haec legerit temptatum quidem illo Martinum periculo, sed uere probatum”

³² *ep.* 3.3, “...rogo quemadmodum tam cit ad te epistula illa potuit peruenire, quam nuper ad Aurelium diaconum scripseramus.”

³³ *cf.* Fontaine, *Vie*, 1179-82.

We are consoled on the death of Martin to the extent that Sulpicius would have Aurelius consoled. We understand the saint's death according to how Sulpicius would have Aurelius understand it. We imagine the second person in the text and try to identify our practice of reading with his.

In the third and final letter, the text makes its generic form yet more prominent. The manuscripts include a salutation and the narrative presence of the recipient—Sulpicius' mother-in-law Bassula—is especially marked. Indeed, what seems the essential narrative content of the letter (that is, the circumstances of Martin's death) is reached only after a lengthy bit of epistolary banter, in which the addressee's reading habits comprise the primary subject matter. As in the second letter to Aurelius, we external readers are here asked to identify our practice of reading, our understanding of the text, with that of the internal recipient.

We should therefore not be surprised when the guidelines for properly reading hagiography are a major concern in these three texts. In the first letter, Sulpicius offers instruction in the practice of exemplary reading; in the second and third, he addresses two readers who themselves engage in such practice, offering Aurelius and Bassula as models of sorts for his external audience and displaying the potential fruits of their reading habits, namely the intercession of Martin on their behalf.

The First Letter: How to Read Martin

Sulpicius continues his Martinian project with a supplementary text that starts again just where the *Life* ended, offering his reader not hagiographical narrative but rather a strategy for its proper interpretation. Sulpicius seems to ask: how should one read Martin? In the first two sentences of

his first letter, Sulpicius outlines two opposing strategies for reading a *Life*. The first group—an apparent majority (*multis*)—have been reading Sulpicius’ *libellum* carefully, zealously even.³⁴ On the other hand, the author has heard of a certain person, who seems very much alike to those mentioned at the end of the *Life*, those *insectatores*, Martin’s detractors and slanderers, men who hate in him what they see not in themselves.³⁵ This person questions how it could happen that Martin was recently subject to a dangerous fire, how the bishop, whom Sulpicius showed to have mastery over not only flames but even life and death, could have nearly been burned himself.³⁶ This question will motivate the letter, with Sulpicius structuring his response as a sort of model for the proper reading of a saintly life. We will see that, in order to understand (and therefore benefit from) Martin’s power, a reader must interpret his deeds in light of fitting exempla.

The first sentence of this letter establishes a particular—we might even say peculiar—setting in which the events of the narrative will be recounted. Sulpicius is visited by a number of monks; they find themselves swapping endless stories and making lengthy discussion. Perhaps naturally given the crowd, there happens to be mention of that book (*mentio incidit libelli mei*) which Sulpicius wrote about the life of Martin.³⁷ The letter, we already know, does not itself begin like a letter, does not look very much like a letter at all. Nevertheless, it is striking that with this first sentence Sulpicius seems to evoke a rather different genre altogether. *The mentio*

³⁴ *ep.* 1.1, *studioseque eum a multis legi libentissime audiebam.*

³⁵ *VM* 27.3, “qui in illo oderant quod in se non uidebant.”

³⁶ *ep.* 1.2, “Interea indicatur mihi dixisse quendam, malo spiritu suscitatum, cur Martinus, qui mortuos suscitasset, flammas domibus depulisset, ipse nuper adustus incendio periculosae fuisset obnoxius passioni.”

³⁷ *ep.* 1.1, “Hesterna die, cum ad me plerique monachi uenissent, inter fabulas iuges longumque sermonem mentio incidit libelli mei, quem de uita Martini episcopi edidi, studioseque eum a multis legi libentissime audiebam.”

incidit is markedly reminiscent of Cicero's *Laelius*, where the phrase occurs twice at that dialogue's outset. The syntax too is typical of the initial scene-setting common in a Ciceronian dialogue, with a circumstantial *cum*-clause followed by the pluperfect subjunctive.³⁸ Even Sulpicius' expressed satisfaction—*libentissime audiebam*—seems to affect a Ciceronian air.³⁹ All this likewise reads very much like the first sentence of Sulpicius' own dialogue, the *Gallus*, which itself resonates markedly with Cicero's philosophical dialogues (and which of course has yet to be written.)⁴⁰ None of this is to say that this first letter was meant as a dialogue. It quite obviously is not one. Rather, Sulpicius here seems to construct, if only briefly, a scene of philosophical *otium* most commonly found in the dialogues of Cicero. Fontaine is quite right on this point: "Tant, dans la pensée secrète de Sulpice, et à la faveur de réminiscences formelles des oeuvres classiques, le «secessus» monastique de Primuliacum n'est pas plus détachée de l'antique "otium" philosophique que la pratique de l'ascétisme ne l'est pour lui du cadre traditionnel de la «uilla»."⁴¹ Fontaine thus adduces a certain "cicéronianisme" evident in this Sulpician retreat filled as it is with *fabulae* and *sermo*.

That retreat, that sense of *otium*, is however disrupted by the mere mention of a slanderer, a man "roused by an evil spirit".⁴² His objections we have already heard: how could it happen

³⁸ Cf. *Acad.* II 1.1.1; *Lael.* 1.3.1; *Brut.* 1.1.1; *Tusc. Disp.* 1.1.1

³⁹ I mean this in a fairly mundane sense, but it is worth noting that this phrase—though common enough in other authors—occurs with rather more regularity in the works of Cicero. A proximity search on the Library of Latin Texts reveals 51 such occurrences in Latin literature before 200 C.E., 22 of which are found in Cicero.

⁴⁰ *G* 1.1, "Cum in unum locum ego et Gallus conuenissemus . . ."

⁴¹ Fontaine, *Vie*, 1125.

⁴² *ep.* 1.2, "malo spiritu suscitatum". This man is roused, stirred, disturbed. Sulpicius uses the very same word to characterize Martin, but the grammatical voice is reversed: Martin himself rouses the dead (*mortuos suscitasset*).

that Martin, given all his powers, was himself nearly burned alive. Sulpicius will explain. For, here is a text which depicts a reader who quite expressly ignored Sulpicius' interpretive advice outlined at the end of the *Life*.⁴³ This reader, who lacks belief and therefore understanding, does not know how properly to interpret the miraculous deeds of Martin's life, neither those which Sulpicius has already recounted in his biography, nor those left out (as this story of Martin in the fire). In this letter, however, Sulpicius will construct an exemplary framework within which his narrative might profitably be read; with that framework established, Sulpicius can recount the event under question. Indeed, before beginning his narrative proper Sulpicius piles one *exemplum* upon another, situating Martin's deeds in a series of biblical precursors, not the least of which is Christ himself. Martin is so depicted, inasmuch as the slanderer attacks him—according to Sulpicius—much as the Jews did Christ.⁴⁴ Sulpicius puts in the mouth of Martin's detractor those taunts leveled against Christ on the cross: "He saved others, but he cannot save himself."⁴⁵ Martin also suffers reproach in the manner of Paul, labelled a murderer when, having just survived a shipwreck, he washes on shore only to be bitten by a viper. Paul of course suffered no harm.⁴⁶ Martin's holiness, like that of the apostle, is remarkable for the dangers encountered, even more than for the virtues displayed. The slanderer, though—by his very abuse—himself undermines his own claims, making Martin similar to Christ and to Paul because he suffers such scorn.

⁴³ Discussed above, 62-67.

⁴⁴ *ep.* 1.3.

⁴⁵ *Mt* 27:42.

⁴⁶ *ep.* 1.5, referring to *Acts* 28:4.

In this way, then, Sulpicius begins to make clear his intended program of exemplary reading: He illustrates how the reader—by applying suitable examples to the story about to be narrated—might properly understand its meaning. He addresses Martin’s detractor: “But even by the example of these events, most wretched of all mortal men, you ought to have been able to convict your own faithlessness; so that, if it had proved a stumbling block to you that Martin seemed to have been touched by a flame of fire, you could thereby have referred his merely being touched to his merits and power, because though surrounded by flames he did not perish.”⁴⁷ That is to say, these two exempla should be enough to understand that Martin’s exposure to fire illustrates not some deficiency, but rather a strength, not impotence but power.

Still, Sulpicius will not say once what he can say twice. And thus the comparisons continue, with Sulpicius suggesting that the saints are more remarkable for the dangers they face than for the powers they display.⁴⁸ Paul is no less a man than Peter, though the latter walked, if unsteadily, atop the waters, while the former was swallowed whole by them, only to emerge intact.⁴⁹ Just as Paul in the water, so Martin in the flames faced a grave danger, was in fact consumed by it, but nevertheless remained unharmed. Sulpicius continues his comparison of Martin and Paul, referring again to *2 Corinthians*. “Just as the apostle relates, who gloried in his nakedness and hunger, in the perils of robbers, all these things are to be endured in common by holy men.”⁵⁰ Sulpicius in fact takes up Paul’s own reasoning—“If I must boast, I will boast of

⁴⁷ *ep.* 1.5, “Atquin uel horum exemplo, omnium mortalium infelicissime, perfidiam tuam coarguere ipse debueras, ut si tibi scandalum ouerat quod Martinus flamma ignis uidebatur adtactus, hunc rursum adtactum ad merita illius et uirtutem referres, quod circumsaepus ignibus non perisset.”

⁴⁸ *ep.* 1.6, “Agnosce enim, miser, agnosce quod nescis, omnes fere sanctos magis insignes periculorum suorum fuisse uirtutibus.”

⁴⁹ Sulpicius here refers to *Mt* 14:22-33 and *2 Cor* 11:25

⁵⁰ *ep.* 1.7 and *2 Cor* 11:26.

my weakness”⁵¹—when he argues that this event, ascribed to Martin’s weakness is actually full of dignity and glory.⁵² The suggestion, then, is that the reader should understand this story of Martin in light of earlier, especially Pauline, exempla. If Martin is another Paul (or better: if the reader interprets the deeds of Martin with an understanding of the deeds of Paul), then Martin’s *uirtus* will be evident.

One objection remains, however. If this event can so demonstrate Martin’s sanctity, why did Sulpicius omit it from his *Life*?⁵³ The answer is not surprising, if one will remember Sulpicius’ insistence on the impossibility of fully comprehending Martin within a single work. Martin cannot be bound by the limits of a text; the fullness of his *uirtus* is ultimately inexpressible. “Let no one wonder that this was omitted by me from that book I wrote about his life, since even there I professed that I had not embraced all of his deeds; because, if I had tried to narrate them in their entirety, I would have published a massive volume for my readers.”⁵⁴ Even Sulpicius notices that he is beginning to repeat himself, notices that these texts keep saying the same thing in different ways, keep supplementing themselves. Here, then, is Martin’s life spilling over the limits of his *Life*, extending beyond a single text by means of repetition, reiteration.

And so Sulpicius at last comes to recount the story of Martin’s near death by fire. This will not of course be the last word on Martin. This we know already, because like Paul from the

⁵¹ 2 Cor 11:30, “si gloriari oportet, quae infirmitatis meae sunt gloriabor”. Sulpicius does not repeat this exact verse in its entirety, but the *infirmitatem* and *gloriae* at ep. 1.8 clearly refer to it.

⁵² ep. 1.7.

⁵³ ep. 1.8.

⁵⁴ ep. 1.8, “Ceterum omissum hoc a me libello illo, quem de uita illius scripsimus, nemo miretur, cum ibidem sim professus me non omnia illius facta complexum, quia, si persequi uniuersa uoluisssem, inmensum uolumen legentiubs edidissem.”

waters he will escape from the flames unharmed. The necessity of a supplementary text will remain even beyond this work; the opportunity will remain for extending Martin's life yet further, for redoubling and repeating his *Life* again and again. But, even within this single narrative, the reader will notice a tendency towards reduplication. For, in this letter, Sulpicius tells his story twice, recounting the events first in the third person, through the eyes of some imagined external viewer, and then as mediated by Martin. The first telling lays out the facts, what actually happened. The second repeats the narrative, but in so doing attends to Martin's own impressions, offering a sort of internal narrative.

On the narrative itself, as opposed to the nature of its telling, I will remark only briefly. One fact is particularly noteworthy: it is Martin's asceticism, his disregard for bodily needs and disdain for luxury of any sort, that causes the fire. His priestly hosts had set out a bed of straw on which Martin might lay; the bishop, however, regarded this an unnecessary luxury and simply tossed it aside before going to sleep.⁵⁵ While Martin was sleeping, it was this straw which caught alight. Martin was thus awoken by the flames and—rather than resorting immediately to prayer—began to struggle with the bolt by which he had secured the door.⁵⁶ He was soon completely surrounded. Even his clothes had caught fire. At this point, the bishop recovered his wits and began to pray. Thus as Martin prayed in the very midst of the fire, unharmed by the flames, monks at last broke open the door, expecting to find Martin burnt to ashes.⁵⁷ The second telling is Sulpicius' reportage of Martin's own testimony: *mihi ipse referebat*.⁵⁸ As in the

⁵⁵ *ep.* 1.10.

⁵⁶ *ep.* 1.11.

⁵⁷ *ep.* 1.13.

⁵⁸ *ep.* 1.14.

conclusion to the *Life*, the text doubles back on itself, recapitulating the events for a second time before the final sentence, which reaffirms the exemplary models Sulpicius had earlier suggested: “From this account, let everyone who might read these things understand that Martin was tried by this peril, but was truly proven.”⁵⁹ The reader will best understand this fact, who interprets Martin’s trial in the context of the proper *exempla*. Here, then, is a letter which shows us a reader of the *Life* who quite expressly ignored Sulpicius’ earlier advice. He does not know how properly to interpret the deeds of Martin’s life (even those omitted from the *Life*). In this letter, Sulpicius demonstrates how to read in an exemplary mode; he demonstrates a readerly practice which relies on the use of past *exempla* in an effort to understand the sanctity of what Martin himself has done.

The Second Letter: Mediating Saintly Presences

If, in the first letter to Eusebius, Sulpicius sets out a programme of exemplary reading, then in the second he begins to display the potential benefits which redound to those who would understand Martin and his death in the proper context. Here, Sulpicius addresses a sympathetic reader—the letter’s recipient, Aurelius—who would interpret Martin’s deeds through the lens of suitable *exempla* and therefore benefit from the saint’s intercession. Sulpicius depicts a readerly model, one which itself depends on the use of *exempla* in its interpretive practice.

In Sulpicius’ Martinian corpus, we see that the bishop’s death will come in multiples, repeated over and again in different versions. Having narrated a near-death experience in the first

⁵⁹ *ep.* 1.15, “Vnde intellegat quisquis haec legerit temptatum quidem illo Martinum periculo, sed uere probatum.”

letter to Eusebius, Sulpicius in this letter to Aurelius describes a hazy vision of Martin's ascent into heaven. This vision—experienced in an intermediary dream state cannily described by Sulpicius—represents the figure of Martin looking not at all like the man Sulpicius had known: the saint's face is aflame, with stars for eyes; he is clad in a white robe and has shining hair.⁶⁰ The dreamer recognizes the bishop nonetheless. Martin holds out a copy of Sulpicius' *Life*, whereupon our author grabs the saint's knees as a suppliant. Martin gives a blessing and is immediately taken away, raised on high until Sulpicius can no longer see him.⁶¹ As Sulpicius strains to follow, he awakes to a servant entering his room. The dream vision having ceased, the reader learns with Sulpicius that Martin has in fact died: the report of two monks is passed along by the household servant. What is more, that report—as described in the letter—serves also to inform Aurelius, the letter's recipient, of the saint's death.

These multiple reports all come in a letter which in the end does not even narrate the particulars Martin's death. Rather, it describes in detail the circumstances of multiple holy deaths, none of them Martin's own, though all represented as potential exemplary precursors. These are not just near-deaths, but multiple and gruesome potential deaths, deaths which Martin surely would have suffered—Sulpicius suggests—had he lived in a different age. Sulpicius addresses a sympathetic reader, a model reader, who would interpret Martin's deeds through the lens of suitable *exempla* and therefore benefit from the saint's intercession. The author tells one martyrdom after another, holding each up as an *exemplum* for Martin, though the holy man suffered no such *passio* and Sulpicius here does not actually arrive at the death of Martin

⁶⁰ *ep.* 2.3, "cum repente sanctum Martinum episcopum uidere mihi uideor, praetextum toga candida, uultu igneo, stellantibus oculis, crine purpureo."

⁶¹ *ep.* 2.4, "Mox in eum luminibus intentis, cum exsatiari uultu illius conspectuque non possem, subito mihi in sublime sublatus eripitur."

himself. In this letter, Sulpicius appropriates the saintly deaths of Martin's exemplars as though they were the bishop's own. All of these could have been—might as well have been, Sulpicius suggests⁶²—Martin's death. We read of them at length, only to reach the letter's end without quite getting to the real thing. Martin could have died on the rack, like the Christian martyrs in the time of Nero or of Decius. He would have submitted himself to flames, like the Hebrew youths. He could have endured the punishment of Isaiah, would gladly have been executed like Paul.⁶³ This is the exemplary framework within which Sulpicius situates Martin's death. Martin, Sulpicius makes clear, did himself experience these deaths, though they are not his own. "For, who ever suffered while Martin did not suffer with him?"⁶⁴

With this long list of suffering, Sulpicius creates a need for consolation. Addressing Aurelius, he asks, "Why do I stir you up to tears and lamentations?"⁶⁵ Sulpicius' letter bears mournful news, but it is also meant to console. The primary content of that consolation is straightforward: Martin will remain present in death as he was present in life. The letter is a powerful literary tool for Sulpicius, because it can serve to mediate a form of presence; in particular, it can bring the author to the mind's eye of the reader. Indeed, the epistolary form was frequently conceived in antiquity as a means of making the author present, of bridging the inherent spatial and temporal gap between author and addressee. Wilcox, for example, has noted that "Cicero uses absence and the shared distress occasioned by it as a thematic device that

⁶² *ep.* 2.12, "Sed quamquam ista non tulerit, inpleuit tamen sine cruore martyrium."

⁶³ *ep.* 2.9-10.

⁶⁴ *ep.* 2.13, "Quo enim ille dolente non doluit?"

⁶⁵ *ep.* 2.16, "Sed quid te in lacrimas fletusque commoueo?"

structures the letter."⁶⁶ This particular epistolary exchange is especially effective because the letter to Aurelius inserts itself into the narrative world Sulpicius has been constructing around the figure of Martin. Aurelius the recipient and Sulpicius the author are themselves characters in Martin's story, and the acts of writing and reading about Martin become part of that very narrative. The internal reader shapes the telling of the story. We as external readers in turn adopt the recipient's readerly context into our own interpretive framework. We read with Aurelius. Like him, we are stricken by the report of Martin's death. Like him, we need consolation.

Sulpicius asks, "Why do I stir you up to tears and lamentations?"⁶⁷ Bearing more than simply a report of a vision and the mournful news of Martin's death, this letter is also a *consolatio*. Sulpicius in fact offers all the standard consolations, but denies their ability to lessen his grief. "If grief would yield to the influence of reason," Sulpicius writes, "I certainly ought to rejoice."⁶⁸ Martin is better off now: he mingles with the prophets and apostles; he follows the lamb as his guide; he is free from all spot and defilement. Sulpicius writes: "I desire you to be comforted, (Aurelius,) though I am unable to console myself."⁶⁹ The standard consolations prove inappropriate for coping with Martin's death. Any mention of Martin drives Sulpicius to lamentation, but still he can not stop thinking of Martin, talking of Martin, writing of Martin. "Can I ever talk of any subject than him?"⁷⁰ Sulpicius asks. This turns out to be the key to

⁶⁶ A. Wilcox notes that "Cicero uses absence and the shared distress occasioned by it as a thematic device that structures the letter," in *The Gift of Correspondence in Classical Rome* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2012), 66; her third chapter, "Absence and Increase", explores this tendency at length, 64-78.

⁶⁷ *ep.* 2.16, "Sed quid te in lacrimas fletusque commoueo?"

⁶⁸ *ep.* 2.8, "si rationem ullam dolor admitteret, gaudere deberem."

⁶⁹ *ep.* 2.16, "Ecce nunc consolatum esse te cupio, qui me solari ipse non possum."

⁷⁰ *ep.* 2.15, "Aut umquam loquens apud te aliud quam de illo loqui potero?"

understanding Sulpicius' literary memorials to Martin and likewise the only effective consolation for Martin's death: so long as we talk about him, write about him, read about him, the saint will remain present in death as he was present in life: "He will not be absent from us; believe me, he will not be absent. He will be among us as we talk about him and stand beside us as we pray. And that which today he deigned to bestow, the chance to see him in his glory, frequently he will offer. And he will protect us, as he did but a little while ago, with his unceasing blessing."⁷¹ The letter stresses the possibility of rendering Martin present even in his unavoidable absence.

This echoes in some ways Conybeare's notion of letters as sacramental.⁷² She has suggested that the letters of Paulinus (a friend and correspondent of Sulpicius) might represent a "spiritualization of the aristocratic habit of forming and maintaining connections by letter."⁷³ Sulpicius dramatizes the play of absence and presence assumed in an epistolary exchange. His innovation is to make the *sermo* accomplished in letter writing one means of rendering Martin, his subject, present as a spiritual patron for writer and reader both. Already in the preface to the earlier *Life of Martin*, Sulpicius has described the possibilities afforded by Martin-focused discourse: "I think I will accomplish something well worth the necessary pains, if I write the life of a most holy man, which shall serve in future as an example to others . . . In so doing, we have regard also to our own advantage, so that we may look for, not a vain remembrance among men, but an eternal reward from God" (*VM* 1.6) This letter to Aurelius extends the salvific potential of writing about Martin to the practice of reading about Martin. Sulpicius sets out a literary

⁷¹ *ep.* 2.16, "Non deerit nobis ille, mihi crede, non deerit: intererit de se sermocinantibus, adstabit orantibus; quodque iam hodie praestare dignatus est, uidendum se in gloria sua saepe praebebit, et adsidua, sicut ante paululum fecit, benedictione nos protegit."

⁷² Catherine Conybeare, *Paulinus Noster: Self and Symbols in the Letters of Paulinus of Nola* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 41-59.

⁷³ *ibid.*, 58.

programme founded on exemplarity which establishes the very act of writing and reading hagiographical literature as a means of making the saint present, a means of obtaining his intercession. By writing Martin as he has done—that is, within the proper exemplary framework—Sulpicius renders the saint present to himself and to his readers. “He will not be absent from us, believe me, he will not be absent. He will be present among us as we discuss him.” Even after Martin’s death, Sulpicius’ literary reproductions will allow his readers to experience the saint’s presence. Sulpicius has a vision, in which a sympathetic reader can participate, simply by understanding Martin’s death in its proper context.

But that is a death which Sulpicius has not yet reached in this narrative of Martin’s life he has been writing across multiple texts. Our author has been hinting at it, almost teasing his readers by showing near-deaths, visions of the death, exemplary deaths, all precursors to the real thing. In that respect, this already supplementary letter looks ahead to further supplement, ahead to another letter where Sulpicius—his readers clearly growing exasperated⁷⁴—will finally tell the story everyone has been waiting for, will finally end the life long since begun.

The Third Letter

In this last of Sulpicius’ letters, written to his mother-in-law Bassula, we find its recipient called to account by the author. Her crime, Sulpicius suggests jokingly, is plunder and robbery.⁷⁵ Bassula has been acquiring (perhaps even by bribing the author’s secretaries) any and all of

⁷⁴ *ep.* 3.4.

⁷⁵ *ep.* 3.1.

Sulpicius' ostensibly private compositions.⁷⁶ She gave herself away, it seems, when she voiced to Sulpicius her impatience at his refusal (in the previous letter to Aurelius) simply to narrate the very circumstances surrounding Martin's death.⁷⁷

In the course of such comic banter, it becomes clear that Sulpicius has anticipated the concerns of external readers in the person of Bassula, his recipient. Sulpicius has to this point simply refused to end Martin's *Life*, drawing out the narrative, always conceiving need for further supplement. "You write that I ought in the same epistle, where I made mention of the death of our holy Martin, to have described the passing of that blessed man."⁷⁸ In gently chastising his mother-in-law for voicing such concerns, he demonstrates the extent of her identification with the presumed external readers. For, Bassula stands accused of reading the author's private correspondence, just as we have done (and continue to do) ourselves, eavesdropping on a conversation between the author and Aurelius (and now again between the author and Bassula).

Sulpicius responds to Bassula's protestations thusly: "As if indeed I published that letter so as to be read by anyone other than him to whom it was ostensibly sent, or as if I were destined to write so great a work that everything to be known about Martin becomes known with only me

⁷⁶ *ep.* 3.2, "Si quid ad amicum familiariter scripsi, si quid forte, dum ludimus, quod uelim tamen occultum esse dictauī, omnia ad te prius paene quam fuerint scripta aut dictata perueniunt."

⁷⁷ *ep.* 3.3, "Nam ut de reliquis taceam, rogo quemadmodum tam cito ad te epistula illa potuit peruenire, quam nuper ad Aurelium diaconum scripseramus."

⁷⁸ *ep.* 3.4, "Namque accepi litteras tuas, quibus scribis in eadem, qua de obitu sancti Martini fecerim mentionem, ipsum beatum uiri transitum exponere debuisse."

as its author!”⁷⁹ The joke here is obvious. Sulpicius—no matter whether he claims to have thus intended—has proven to do both. Regarding the latter exclamation: Sulpicius has become our single source of written information on Martin (and may well have been for his contemporaries also). He has in fact written “so great a work that everything to be known about Martin [has become] known with only [Sulpicius] as author.” Regarding the former: these three letters, to Eusebius, Aurelius and Bassula, prove essential to the narrative of Martin’s life as Sulpicius would tell it. Without them, the *Life* would be markedly incomplete. In many ways, therefore, we read Sulpicius ending his account of Martin’s life with that same tack he used at the very outset. As in the preface to the *Life*, here he is a reluctant author.

That ostensible reluctance, of course, stands in stark contrast to—is to some extent even a product of—Bassula’s voracity in her practice of reading. Perhaps reflecting the popularity of the *Life* among contemporary readers,⁸⁰ Bassula is ever eager for more information about Martin: she cajoles and bribes Sulpicius’ *notarii* and manages to get hold of all Sulpicius’ writing. He contends: “You have left me not a single page of writing at home, no book, not even a letter, to such a degree do you steal everything and publish it all.”⁸¹ This practice of reading is in many ways the proper subject of the letter’s first section. That comic scene, in which Bassula employs secretaries to whisk away anything Sulpicius might write, serves to foreground the experience of reading, even dramatizes the extent to which readers determine the message of the text. Sulpicius writes Bassula a generative role in the creation of Martin’s life in letters: “I shall satisfy your

⁷⁹ *ep.* 3.4, “Quasi uero ego illam epistulam aut legendam alii praeterquam ipsi ad quem missa uidetur ediderim, aut ego tanto sim operi destinatus ut omnia, quae de Martino cognosci oportet, me potissimum scribente notescat!”

⁸⁰ *cf.* *G* 1.26

⁸¹ *ep.* 3.1, “Nullam mihi domi chartulam, nullum libellum, nullam epistulam reliquisti: ita furaris omnia, ita uniuersa diuulgas.”

wish with a few words”.⁸² The end of Martin’s life—as represented by Sulpicius—is shown to be the result of a union between writer and reader both.

Indeed, that union is instrumental because it also serves to produce those benefits which accrue to those who would read and truly understand Martin. “From heaven, I trust, as a guardian he looks down upon me while I write these things and you as you read them.”⁸³ The joint practice of reading and writing serves to occasion saintly intercession. That Sulpicius does not here emphasize exemplary reading in particular should not be especially problematic: by this point in the Martinian corpus, it is clearly established that a favorable reader of Martin such as Bassula (and by extension the external readers) should well understand the importance of exempla for such an undertaking. Rather, in this letter we get a sense of the extent of Bassula’s reading and her associated zeal. Sulpicius makes clear that the result of such reading is the opportunity to participate in Martin’s intercession.

These letters to Aurelius extends the salvific potential of writing about Martin to the practice of reading about Martin. Sulpicius sets out a literary programme founded on exemplarity which establishes the very act of writing and reading hagiographical literature as a means of making the saint present, a means of obtaining his intercession. By writing Martin as he has done—that is, within the proper exemplary framework—Sulpicius renders the saint present to himself and to his readers. “He will not be absent from us, believe me, he will not be absent. He will be present among us as we discuss him.”⁸⁴ Even after Martin’s death, Sulpicius’ literary reproductions will allow his readers to experience the saint’s presence. Sulpicius has a vision, in

⁸² *ep.* 3.5, “paucis tuae satisfaciam uoluntati.”

⁸³ *ep.* 3.21, “Illinc nos, ut spero, custodiens me haec scribentem respicit, te legentem.”

⁸⁴ *ep.* 2.16, “Non deerit nobis ille, mihi crede, non deerit: intererit de se sermocinantibus, adstabit orantibus.”

which a sympathetic reader can participate, simply by understanding Martin's death in its proper context.

With this, we might even begin to understand why it is appropriate that only these three letters of Sulpicius survive to us, despite his frequent correspondence certainly with Paulinus and presumably many others. Discourse on Martin is the only topic which holds value for Sulpicius. "Can I ever talk of any subject but him?"⁸⁵ The practice of writing and the practice of reading about Martin will serve an ultimately salvific end. By writing Martin, Sulpicius renders the saint present to himself and to his readers. The shared literary project of author and audience is one means of obtaining salvation. In this context, it becomes easier to see the necessity—for the author and his audience even more than his subject—of writing Martin an afterlife in literature. These letters, an essential component in that larger project, demonstrates most clearly the potential benefits that redound to readers of Martin.

⁸⁵ *ep.* 2.15. See above, 84.

Chapter III

READING GENRE IN THE *GALLUS*

The *Gallus* is a literary dialogue depicting a conversation over two days and between three interlocutors, Postumianus, Gallus and Sulpicius. After an initial (and elaborate) scene-setting, the conversation begins with Postumianus relating his *historia peregrinationis*, an account of his journey to the deserts of Egypt and Palestine, whose inhabitants and whose very landscape so seized the imagination of ascetically-inclined Christians in the fourth century and across the very breadth of the Roman Empire. Postumianus' speech, though it recounts a story *about* an idealized East, is nevertheless a story very much *of* the West, a story which engages the ongoing invention of a Christian discourse of monasticism for a Latin Roman audience. This becomes evident—at least in its broad strokes—from the speech of the interlocutor who follows Postumianus. Gallus continues the dialogue by enumerating the myriad virtues of Martin, that fourth century bishop of Tours made famous by his wondrous miracles and (just as importantly) by the vivid biographical depiction he receives in Sulpicius' earlier *Life of Martin*. Gallus continues until the fading light of day ends his speech. The three interlocutors resume the next morning, now joined by a *turba monachorum* eager to hear stories of Martin: after just a little prodding, Gallus readily obliges them, recounting a series of exemplary stories and sayings of that holy man.

This brief précis is somewhat disingenuous, however, when it describes the *Gallus* too simply as three wholly unbroken speeches delivered by Postumianus and Gallus respectively. For, each section of continuous speech is broken up at irregular intervals by interjections or intrusions from the speaker's fellow interlocutors. Jacques Fontaine has termed these dialogic

interruptions *intermèdes gaulois*, marking out seven such passages in his *Sources Chrétiennes* edition of the *Gallus*. These outbursts of dialogue proper, ostensibly spontaneous exchanges inflected with a markedly ironic humor, allow Sulpicius to confront the potential of his audience to enact exemplary performance: they do so by inviting the reader into an active role, by inviting the reader to identify with the interlocutor who interrupts and interprets the just narrated account. In fact, I would suggest that these *intermèdes* serve as interpretive guides to the process of exemplary reading. For, the possibilities and pitfalls of ethical imitation directly inform the central questions of these interruptions. Dialogue and imitation here function in concert. These *intermèdes*—the passages where the *Gallus* most resembles a dialogue in form—are likewise the passages in which Sulpicius’ vocabulary of exemplarity is most densely present. The critical reader will soon recognize the great extent to which the generic form of the *Gallus* might work in concert with the exemplary discourse so prevalent in the text.

The literary rationale which undergirds such a choice of genre is not immediately self-evident. The primary subject matter—as traditionally conceived by scholars—sure does not demand it: if the text’s foremost aim is hagiographical (*sensu* Delehay, i.e. to increase religious devotion to the saint) or (what is perhaps more accurate) if the text enacts a hagiographical discourse (*sensu* Uytfanghe),¹ what is it about dialogue that is particularly suitable for describing the miraculous *uirtus* of Martin? Sulpicius has already accomplished this very task by way of a distinctly different genre—narrative biography—in his *Life of Martin*. Hence Schmidt, who writes: “Schliesslich bleibt zu bedenken, dass allein die Abfassung von Hagiographie in

¹ See above, Introduction, 17-19.

Dialogform ein Faktum darstellt, das nicht selbstverständlich ist.”² The *Gallus* has often been regarded as a sort of supplement or companion piece to that earlier *Life*, and we might easily assume that its hagiographical subject matter could have been similarly presented. We must therefore ask: why dialogue? Stancliffe traces the generic form to underlying apologetic aims in the text: “Biography was no stranger to apologetics in the ancient world...[but] for this purpose, the dialogue form was even more apposite than straight biography: it is admirably suited for discussion and controversy.”³ Stancliffe is in many ways right on this point. Sulpicius does at times address the local controversies in which Martin and his disciples seem regularly to have found themselves. There is moreover some precedent for the use of the dialogue form in Christian apologetic literature, the obvious examples being Justin Martyr's *Dialogue with Trypho* and the *Octavius* of Minucius Felix.⁴ In the *Gallus* itself, ecclesiastical controversy and clerical

² P. Schmidt, "Zur Typologie und Literarisierung des frühchristlichen lateinischen Dialogs," in *Christianisme et Formes Littéraires de l'Antiquité tardive en Occident* (Geneva: Vandoeuvres, 1976), 124.

³ Stancliffe, *St. Martin and His Hagiographer*, 106.

⁴ A recent collection of essays makes a serious contribution to the study of apologetic texts in the imperial period: Mark Edwards, et al., *Apologetics in the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). Tessa Rajak's essay in that volume, "Talking at Trypho: Christian Apologetic as Anti-Judaism in Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*," 59-80, discusses the apologetic function of Justin Martyr's dialogue. Simon Price's essay there, "Latin Christian Apologetics: Tertullian, Cyprian and Minucius Felix," 105-29, treats the *Octavius* at some length, but only with cursory attention to questions of literary form. An excellent recent article on the relationship between dialogue and apology is Andrew Jacobs, "Dialogical Differences: (De-)Judaizing Jesus' Circumcision," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 15.3 (2007): 291-335. A revised version appears as a chapter in his recent book, Andrew Jacobs, *Christ Circumcised: A Study in Early Christian History and Difference* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012). There are, however, marked differences between these apologetic dialogues and the *Gallus*, not least the explicit concern the former show for defining the boundaries of accepted Christian practice and belief. Though the *Gallus* does serve as an implicit defence of Martin (and perhaps by extension those practicing a kind of Martinian asceticism), it does not engage in the same formal apologetic. Of course, many of these texts—the *Octavius* is a particularly striking example—likewise engage the classical tradition of dialogue. Nevertheless, the *Gallus* does not hinge on issues of practice and belief. It is at its heart a narrative (or series of related narratives). That it presents such a narrative in dialogue form is of particular

rivalry are topics that recur with some frequency, but no matter the attention Sulpicius pays to these issues, their depiction in the text in no ways depends on the dialogue form: such controversy does not coalesce around those sections of the text which do dialogue, so to speak. Those sections that most clearly engage the formal features of the dialogue genre take a rather different focus.

I would suggest instead that the value of the text's genre is more fundamental, that it is a direct function of the rhetoric of exemplarity found throughout the dialogue. Matthew Roller, in his work on exempla in classical Roman historiography, has shown the essential role that an audience plays in the evaluation, commemoration and imitation of a model in exemplary discourse.⁵ Note, then, that a dialogue constructs just such an audience as a built-in feature of the text, with the individual interlocutors serving not only to narrate the deeds of the holy men under discussion, but likewise to mark out for a secondary audience of readers their ethical value as suitable objects of commemoration and imitation. The *Gallus*—by virtue of its generic form—is able to model for the reader the very process of exemplary imitation, to enact in the text the first instance in a presumably iterative series of social reproductions. In the dialogue, the character Gallus himself serves as a model, becomes for the audience an exemplary reader of *exempla*. In a text full of ethical models, this character patterns for the reader how exactly to read in an exemplary mode. In the process of so doing, he likewise demonstrates how a reader might himself become an author. That model of active reading we began to examine in the previous

interest to us here, but this choice of genre cannot necessarily be explained by appealing to other Christian works which themselves employ a similar form. The *Gallus* is a dialogue. The *Octavius* is a dialogue. They need not be a dialogue for the same reason. Subsequent discussion will help us to understand more clearly the reasons why Sulpicius might choose this particular form.

⁵ Matthew Roller, "Exemplarity in Roman Culture: The Cases of Horatius Cocles and Cloelia," *Classical Philology* 99.1 (2004): 1-56, esp. 4-10.

chapter reaches its logical extreme here in the *Gallus*, where the figure of the reader comes to participate directly in the writing of hagiography. In the character of *Gallus*, we read a figure who serves first as a primary witness to the narrative being recounted and then as an author and hagiographer himself. Sulpicius as author shows how readers might themselves become authors of a saintly life. In this schema, the hagiographer becomes a model for readers, and the act of producing hagiography becomes an essential first link in the chain of saintly imitation.

Genre and the *Gallus*: Reviewing Past Scholarship

I have taken for granted the fact that the *Gallus* is straightforwardly a dialogue in form. Though all the work's commentators have agreed (to varying degrees) with this assessment and have identified the literary dialogue as one of the fundamental components of the *Gallus*' formal structure, nevertheless a number of these very same scholars equivocate unnecessarily in their assessment of the text's genre. Only a very few have made sufficiently detailed considerations of the *Gallus*' genre. They are (in order of publication): Voss (1970b) and Schmidt (1977), both of whom addressed the work in the context of a broader discussion of dialogue in early Christian literature; Stancliffe (1983), González Iglésias (1995) and Fontaine (2005, 2006) have also considered this question (though to markedly different extents) in their studies of the Martinian corpus.

Each of these scholars would agree that the text announces itself as a dialogue in the classical tradition, especially that represented by the philosophical dialogues of Cicero. And although the dialogue does not take as its focus the traditional topics of philosophy or civic engagement; nevertheless, it proposes a reasonable Christian parallel, namely the competing

claims of popular models of ascetic practice.⁶ Even the title of the work announces its generic intentions, named as it is after one of the interlocutors. Schmidt explains:

“Sulpicius bemüht sich um einen szenisch gestalteten Dialog in der Tradition Ciceros, auf den schon der ursprüngliche, in der handschriftlichen Überlieferung verloren gegangene Titel Gallus weist; nach dem Hauptunterredner heissen z.B. auch Hortensius, Laelius und Cato, drei Partner führen neben anderen ciceronischen Gesprächen die *Academica* in ihrer zweiten Fassung vor, denen Sulpicius am meisten verpflichtet ist.”⁷

Fontaine agrees: “Ces deux titres, au demeurant, marquaient doublement l'intention de s'y réclamer, au moins théoriquement, des dialogues de Cicéron.”⁸ Elsewhere Fontaine remarks that “[l]e décor matériel et le climat moral de la première scène sont ceux d'un “dialogue de villa” ciceronien.”⁹ The narrative setting of that first scene echoes rather closely the beginning of the *Academica*.¹⁰ Voss likewise enumerates the similarities between Sulpicius' dialogue and those of Cicero, adducing the title of the work, the character of the interlocutors, the text's setting and its distinct atmosphere of *otium*.¹¹ He regards the *hochliterarisch dialog* as one component in the

⁶ On asceticism as philosophy, see below, 108 n. 46.

⁷ Schmidt, “Zur Typologie,” 121.

⁸ Fontaine, “Sulpice Sévère et l'Esthétique de la prose théodosienne,” *Revue des Études Latines* 83 (2005): 188.

⁹ Fontaine, *Gallus*, 23.

¹⁰ *G* 1.1.1 and *Acad. Prior* 1.1.1 set the scene in similar ways and with similar syntax. We consider the Ciceronian echoes in the *Gallus* more fully below, 107-12.

¹¹ Voss, *Der Dialog in der frühchristlichen Literature* (München: Verlag, 1970), 311.

formal composition of the *Gallus*. Stancliffe too agrees that “traces of the influence of Ciceronian dialogues are certainly discernible”.¹²

Despite this evidence and despite the apparent unanimity of this identification, many of these scholars exhibit a certain unease with so straightforward a generic definition (though Schmidt and González Iglésias are notable exceptions). To some extent this equivocation is a function of the ambiguities inherent to generic identification. At the same time, I would suggest that the qualifications so regularly suggested by scholars are the result of problematic assumptions about the expected content of the literary dialogue. Voss, having first identified the *Gallus* as little more than a *Wundertatenbericht*,¹³ describes it in a slightly later and more comprehensive appraisal as a combination of two genres: the *hochliterarisch Dialog* mentioned above and the *Reise-Erzählung*.¹⁴ Schmidt differs from Voss, inasmuch as he identifies not travel narrative but biography as the secondary genre exerting particular influence on the *Gallus*. Working towards a typology of early Christian dialogues, he groups this text with Gregory’s dialogues, applying the label *hagiographische Dialog*.¹⁵ He describes the fundamental concern of this subgenre: “Die neben der inhaltlichen Homogenität den Typus bestimmende Funktion ist mir der erbaulichen Intention der Hagiographie allgemein gegeben”¹⁶

¹² Stancliffe, *St. Martin and his Hagiographer*, 104.

¹³ Voss, "Berühngen von Hagiographie und Historiographie in der Spätantike," in *Frühmittelalterliche Studien. Jahrbuch des Instituts für Frühmittelalterforschung der Universität Münster* 4 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1970), 60-1.

¹⁴ Voss, "Berühngen," 312.

¹⁵ The five types of dialogue which Schmidt identifies are: (i) der dogmatische Kontroversdialog, (ii) der philosophisch-theologische Dialog, (iii) der didaktische Dialog, (iv) der hagiographische Dialog, and (v) der selbstbetrachtende Dialog. For a summary of these types and some representative examples, see Schmidt, "Zur Typologie," 109-127.

¹⁶ Schmidt, "Zur Typologie," 121.

Unlike Voss who describes a juxtaposition of multiple genres, Schmidt marks out a subtype (based on subject matter and purpose) within the broader formal category of dialogue. This seems a more reasonable approach, one which acknowledges the influence of new or varied content without regarding it as a sort of contamination of generic form. Stancliffe in many ways follows Schmidt's assessment, similarly adducing in the *Gallus* characteristics of biography and dialogue both. However, rather than considering the text as a representative of a particular subset of dialogue, she sees it as a juxtaposition of the Roman dialogue tradition and an almost completely unattested genre of biography written in dialogue: "Thus, on the question of literary form, I would suggest that Sulpicius' casting of his material as dialogue owes something to the Roman dialogue tradition of Cicero and Minucius Felix; and something, probably, to a surviving classical tradition of biography in dialogue form."¹⁷

González Iglésias, whose excellent work on the *Gallus* has been somewhat overlooked in the most recent scholarship, differs from Schmidt in the content of his classification, but echoes him to the extent that he understands the *Gallus* unequivocally as a dialogue. Schmidt, we have seen, marks out the essential discursive features of a text in order to identify subclasses of dialogue; González Iglésias relies on the formal qualities of the text to offer further definition, distinguishing works of dialogue along two axes (*narrativo/no narrativo* and *narrado/dramático*).¹⁸ Sulpicius' *Gallus* is narrated (as opposed to dramatically presented) and itself narrates a series of stories: for González Iglésias, it is a "diálogo narrado y narrativo". Inasmuch as he relies especially on the formal features of the text (and therefore avoids conflating discursive content with generic form), González Iglésias suggests a subclassification

¹⁷ Stancliffe, *St. Martin and his Hagiographer*, 105.

¹⁸ Juan Antonio González Iglésias, "Estudio del género del diálogo en autores latinos tardíos," (Phd diss., Universidad de Salamanca, 1995), 176-83.

that is both convincing and insightful: it also serves to mark out the *Gallus* as a formal experiment in the dialogue genre.¹⁹ For present purposes, however, most important is the acknowledgment that the *Gallus* is essentially a dialogue, no matter the subjects discussed therein.

Fontaine's recent and influential work on the *Gallus* nevertheless regards the text and its genre as fundamentally characterized by an admixture of various components, advancing yet further the notion of juxtaposition found earlier in Stancliffe and Voss. Fontaine situates the Martinian writings of Sulpicius in a broader "esthétique de la prose Théodosienne" marked especially by eclecticism.²⁰ Fontaine finds everywhere in the *Gallus* an "esthétique du mélange",²¹ which manifests in the language and tone of the work, but also in its genre, which Fontaine describes as a mixture of history and dialogue, citing a "dualité d'intentions éclipse le malaise que peut éprouver le lecteur du *Gallus*."²² So too in his critical edition and commentary, Fontaine talks of "structures juxtaposées".²³ He cites characteristics of the traditional "journal de voyage",²⁴ of miracle stories,²⁵ and (naturally enough) of dialogue.²⁶

¹⁹ *ibid.*, 26.

²⁰ Fontaine, "l'Esthétique de la prose," 179.

²¹ *ibid.*, 190.

²² *ibid.*, 190.

²³ Fontaine, *Gallus*, 29-38.

²⁴ *ibid.*, 29. This echoes the characterization of the *Gallus* in Voss, "Behrungen," as (in part) *Reise-Erzählung*.

²⁵ *ibid.*, 36-7.

²⁶ *ibid.*, 38.

Each of these scholars has in fact identified characteristics essential to a thorough understanding of the text. I would, however, suggest that this practice of identifying multiple genres in the *Gallus* seems to be the result of a tendency to conflate purpose or even subject matter with generic form. That is to say, these scholars tend to qualify or limit the rather obvious genre of the text, namely dialogue, because they see it moving beyond (or falling short of) the traditional subject matter of the form. Indeed, because Sulpicius' *Gallus* does not at first glance seem to share the philosophical concerns of the foundational texts in the dialogue tradition, scholars have unnecessarily created a need for further definition.

Dialogue as a Literary Genre in Antiquity

I am here suggesting that dialogue need not have some dedicated purpose which the genre naturally serves, nor some pre-defined content for which it is a natural carrier. There is no need to assume a "common rationale"²⁷ for the dialogue form: it is neither the sole purview of dialectic philosophy, nor the exclusive product of an ostensibly open or democratic society (to adduce the two most common arguments). Because the development of this particular literary form can be ascribed to so particular a place, so particular a social and historical context, scholars often demand that dialogue be of a kind with those earliest examples from fifth- and

²⁷ The phrase is borrowed from Alex Long, "Plato's dialogues and a common rationale for dialogue form," in *The End of Dialogue in Antiquity*, Simon Goldhill, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

fourth-century BCE Athens. In this reckoning, dialogue is a reflection of democracy, a vehicle for the reasoned exchange of philosophical and civic ideals.²⁸

I would, however, be wary of demanding too much from dialogue, of setting the stakes too high, so to speak. The genre need not be some indicator of dialogue in its broader, metaphorical sense: dialogue does not need to *do* dialogue in the way that Goldhill, for example, intends it.²⁹ As Schmidt and González Iglésias seem so clearly to recognize, dialogue can do many things. A dialogue can do dialectic.³⁰ A dialogue can do controversy. So too can a dialogue do biography, relate miracles or recount a journey. These are subjects for which dialogue is a suitable form. It can tell the story of a holy man and holy men, just as a *Life* can, just as letters can. We should therefore mark a distinction between the discursive program of the text (which is predominantly hagiographical, in the sense intended by Uytfanghe's "discours hagiographique") and the literary genre, whose form can be used in diverse contexts and for diverse ends. The subject matter of the *Gallus*, in particular its "discours hagiographique", is a novel experiment in the dialogue tradition, but we will see that Sulpicius does consciously engage that tradition in his work.

²⁸ Cf. especially Simon Goldhill, "Why don't Christians do dialogue?" in *The End of Dialogue in Antiquity*, Simon Goldhill, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 2-5. See also Lloyd, *The Revolutions of Wisdom: Studies in the Claims and Practice of Greek Science* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1987).

²⁹ Goldhill, "Christians," 1. Goldhill at times distinguishes and at times conflates the dialogue form with thoroughly modern notions of "dialogue" in the sense of reasoned and reasonable exchange across intellectual, religious or ethno-political borders.

³⁰ Though we might even acknowledge the possibility that philosophical dialectic—conceived especially as reasoned argumentation—and the literary form of dialogue work at cross-purposes in the Platonic corpus. Despite their traditional association, Dmitri Nikulin, *Dialectic and Dialogue* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010) suggests that dialogue always retains the ability to obstruct the pursuit of a philosophical argument rooted in dialectic reasoning, 95.

Some recent scholarship on dialogue in antiquity would seem to reinforce my contention that we need not assume that this genre of dialogue is a vehicle only for one category of discourse. Cooper and Dal Santo have discussed dialogue as a “mode of literary representation”, showing what it looks like when Christian authors of late antiquity and the early middle ages (Boethius and Gregory the Great) take up the form.³¹ But even for authors and texts that stand earlier in this literary tradition, we can discern varied rationales for the adoption of the dialogue form as the genre is adapted to changing discursive modes. Even the dialogues of Plato display no common rationale for their dialogue form, as Long has shown.³² Long starts by asking what the genre might accomplish for its practitioners: what is it about the dialogue form in particular that attracts authors? Is dialogue the “hallmark of a certain outlook”?³³ Long answers in the negative by demonstrating that not even when limiting ourselves to only the dialogues of Plato can we identify some common rationale: across his various dialogues, he marshals the genre in different ways and to different ends. Similarly, Blondell has shown that dialogue is not intrinsically tied to the practice of philosophy, asking instead what exactly Plato gains by adopting the dialogue form in his individual works.³⁴

All this work is an overt response to the problematic tendency (still prevalent) to conflate “dialectic reasoning” and the dialogue form, a line of thinking which does a disservice even to

³¹ Kate Cooper and Matthew Dal Santo, "Boethius, Gregory the Great and the Christian 'afterlife' of classical dialogue," in *The End of Dialogue in Antiquity*, Simon Goldhill, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 173.

³² Long, "Common rationale," 45.

³³ *ibid.*, 45.

³⁴ Ruby Blondell, *The Play of Character in Plato's Dialogues* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 37-52.

such obviously philosophically-minded dialogues as those of Cicero.³⁵ Implicit in this argument is the troubling assumption inherent to so much scholarship, which holds a written text as somehow inert, a pale reflection of vital and original speech. Those dialogues of Plato that offer a dramatic and lively presentation of Socrates playfully goading and baiting his interlocutors are taken to be something like accurate reflections of actual conversation and are more “open” (whatever that might mean) or “democratic” (no matter the anachronistic assumptions which underlie the use of such a term). Even disregarding the obvious protestations about the relationship between a Platonic dialogue and Socratic speech, I would suggest that the written word allows authors of dialogue, and certainly Sulpicius, a number of vital opportunities for creative imitation. Literary influence does not somehow mark a text as inherently derivative, does not consign it to mere mimicking.³⁶ Nor does Sulpicius' text lose its force if it is understood

³⁵ cf. Malcolm Schofield, "Ciceronian Dialogue," in *The End of Dialogue in Antiquity*, Simon Goldhill, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 63-84.

³⁶ As, for example, Harold Tarrant, "Dialogue and Orality in a Post-Platonic Age," in *Signs of Orality: The Oral Tradition and its Influence in the Greek and Roman World*, ed. E.A. MacKay (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 181-98, suggests when he attempts to trace the motivating energy of the written forms of post-Platonic dialogue to a persistent oral tradition of symposiastic philosophical debate: "While to some degree remaining indebted to the conventions of Plato's more literary dialogues, they are not *just* imitators of literature but also imitators of life as they saw it," 196 (emphasis mine). This tendency to identify—usually in carefully selected dialogues—a direct relationship between the text and some real life conversation persists in the scholarship. Even more recently than Tarrant, P. Burton, "Genre and Fact in the Preface to Cicero's *De Amicitia*," *Antichthon* 41 (2007): 13-32, has argued for the particular historicity of Cicero's *De Amicitia* (on the basis of Cicero's own assertions, the assumed historical knowledge of his audience and specific aspects of language use). It is not wholly implausible to assume that literary dialogues in antiquity might have some actual conversation as their precursor: certainly the authors of such text would sometimes have us believe such is the case. Rather, I am stressing that these texts, whatever their relationship to oral performance, cannot grant us access to it.

to be a self-conscious literary construction rather than a transcript, however accurate, of a real conversation between real interlocutors in real life.³⁷

Here the goal is not to prescribe or proscribe the attendant possibilities of genre in literary production. Labels are useful in this context only insofar as their descriptive qualities help us to understand the text under study. The difficulty we encounter when employing these labels and the difficulty, more generally, with genre theory and its application in the study of literature is the lack of a stable terminology coherent across the works of multiple theorists. To be somewhat crass, we regularly find scholars looking for a series of slightly different words that imply something about the form or manner of literary presentation as a means of adding nuance to traditional explanations.³⁸ Here, I understand genre to function not as some fixed set of

³⁷ I take it for granted that the text to which we have access is, by its very nature, a literary representation. Whether or not we assume that there occurred an actual conversation between three real people named Sulpicius, Postumianus and Gallus in a real place called Primuliacum and that the content of said conversation has some relationship to its depiction in the *Gallus* does not especially matter. That conversation is necessarily mediated by the text as it has survived to us, a text written by a single author and therefore rendered remote from the original (whether by the ostensibly simple project of editing—through omission or correction or similar processes—or by actual invention). Even if we were to assume the presence of stenographers at this imagined conversation—as some have, see e.g. González Iglésias, *Estudio*, 122ff.—the representation of that conversation was later passed through the hands of an author writing a first person into the text and identifying himself as Sulpicius.

³⁸ The term genre therefore finds a wide array of definitions and applications, as we have already seen in the discussion of the dialogue form in antiquity and as I explain in more general terms below. Scholars simultaneously propose a number of sub-categories for refining further the notion of genre. Intractable complexity is evident even in the more useful theoretical explanations of genre and its function. Gérard Genette, *The Architext: An Introduction*, trans. Jane Lewin (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1979) suggests distinguishing mode (“modes d’énonciation”) from genre as a means of undermining the ostensible naturalness of the three Aristotelian genres of epic, drama and lyric, *passim* and esp. 60-72. In his definition, the different modes refer to the manner in which the text presents itself, namely through narration (whether pure or mixed) or dramatic imitation. Alastair Fowler, *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982) likewise employs the term mode but in an “adjectival” sense, in which modes qualify or modify a particular genre. Modes denote a kind of subgenre: they “are understood as the extensions of certain genres beyond specific and time-bound formal structures to a broader specification of ‘tone’ . . . [and] they

categories into which authors insert their work nor as a retrospective taxonomy used to classify texts across the sweep of literary history.³⁹ Genre is historically contingent and inherently flexible, dependent upon a shared set of assumptions about the literary markers that define generic categories but equally dependent upon the possibility that those assumptions might be altered, subverted or altogether ignored. The result is that classification systems that rely on a set of necessary and sufficient conditions for allowing a work entry into a particular genre inevitably fail to account for essential (and seemingly obvious) members of the category, because “every work deviates from any particular set of characteristics that may be attributed to its kind.”⁴⁰ Genres, in fact, accommodate deviation from the norm at every level of a text’s production.

I therefore attend closely to genre here not because it offers a retrospective system of classification. Rather, I make the (by now relatively uncontroversial claim) that genre is constitutive and that it moreover depends upon, even helps to condition, a certain response (or

specify thematic features and certain forms and modalities of speech, but not the formal structures or even the semiotic medium through which the text is to be realised,” John Frow, *Genre* (London: Routledge, 2005), 65. So, Fowler would talk of novel in the comic mode, a gothic thriller, or a pastoral elegy. We might say that the *Gallus* is a dialogue in the “hagiographical mode” (where we might loosely equate Fowler’s understanding of modes with Uytfanghe’s description of a “discours hagiographique”; see above, 17-19). Its mode of enunciation—in Genette’s schema—would be mixed narration. These various labels really do help us to identify salient structural features of literary texts, but the incoherent terminology renders their consistent use somewhat pointless.

³⁹ This is a widely accepted position, one long since advanced in the work of such authors as Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1971), who suggests that the purpose of genre theory is “not so much to classify as to clarify [...] traditions and affinities, thereby bringing out a large number of literary relationships that would not be noticed so long as there were no context established for them,” 247-48; or Alastair Fowler, *Kinds of Literature*, who argues that genre is an “instrument not of classification or prescription, but of meaning,” 22.

⁴⁰ John Snyder, *Prospects of Power: Tragedy, Satire, the Essay, and the Theory of Genre* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1991), 1. So we understand the *Metamorphoses* to be an epic poem, *Tristram Shandy* to be a novel, Altman’s *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* to be a western, despite the fact that (and to some extent, because) these works subvert the fundamental expectations of their genre.

range of responses) in its audience. To the extent that the notion of genre manifests in a simultaneous reinforcement and subversion of expectation, its literary deployment depends on a shared set of assumptions about the patterns and prompts that constitute a given generic form. Readers are expected and themselves expect to recognize and thereby reinforce these formal cues. In its initial scene-setting, that is in the framing narrative of the work, the *Gallus* signals that it will be a dialogue—one cast in relation to a Ciceronian prototype—by a series of markers or cues. The *Gallus* deploys the generic strategies of a relatively well-defined form and that definition is made possible only because we can identify abundant and widely-read literary hypotexts or predecessors. We might therefore see genre operating between the poles of tradition and reception. In the *Gallus*, we can trace that movement, especially in the dialogue's framing narrative. More substantially, we can demonstrate how the use of a specific generic tradition, in this case dialogue, affords Sulpicius a number of possibilities for guiding the reception of his work. The content of the dialogue tradition in antiquity is not some constrictive barrier beyond which Sulpicius cannot pass, but instead represents a fertile semantic field in which Sulpicius as author might cultivate his own peculiar take on the form.

It is certainly the case that form and function reinforce each other quite strongly in the *Gallus*, but we will see that this interplay need not be seen to repeat the generic rationale of earlier dialogues. Indeed, we have said once already that dialogue can tell the story of a holy man, just as easily as might a *Life* or letters. But when we mark a change in form, such as is evident in the Martinian corpus, we absolutely must ask what particular advantages the dialogue form offers Sulpicius. Rather than explain away the content as the encroachment of some other genre, we must ask how the generic form of the *Gallus* serves to reinforce its content. In the next

section we will therefore consider those formal features which mark the *Gallus* as dialogue and interrogate their function within the text.

Sulpicius' Appropriation of the Dialogue Form

The *Gallus* seems in a rather obvious way to supply the essential feature of dialogue: it is a literary text depicting conversation. J.P. Aygon, however, has recently argued that ancient grammarians and orators defined the genre more carefully in antiquity, identifying a characteristic style and subject matter.⁴¹ A dialogue is not defined simply—nor even primarily, according to Aygon—by the presence of conversation. "Naturel, grâce, liberté et simplicité, voilà donc les quelques caractères qui dessinent avec une certaine cohérence les contours d'un "style du dialogue" chez les rhéteurs et qui finalement assurent sa spécificité."⁴² The generic form is further buttressed by an assumed subject: "c'est le ton et le style d'une part, le sujet philosophique de l'autre qui déterminent finalement ce type d'oeuvre."⁴³ I have already cautioned against scholarly understandings of genre that presume some common rationale or characteristic function for a literary category, but the testimony of ancient authors cannot be dismissed out of hand.⁴⁴ We might suggest that the *Gallus* nevertheless conforms to these somewhat more rigid

⁴¹ Informal and philosophical, respectively. See J.P. Aygon, "Le dialogue comme genre dans la rhétorique antique," *Pallas* 59 (2002): 197-208.

⁴² *ibid.*, 207.

⁴³ *ibid.*, 207.

⁴⁴ Though it must be noted that Aygon's evidence for the prevalence of an assumed subject matter is rather slight: he shows quite convincingly that dialogues are expected to be rather more informal in tone (as set against oratory) and that this is also the presumed style of philosophical discourse. He then moves quickly from this evidence of a shared style to the notion that dialogues do philosophy and finally to the

criteria. It would be easy enough to identify an informal tone in the text,⁴⁵ and scholars have made the case that in the fourth century ascetic Christian authors began to identify the practice and theory of asceticism as a sort of philosophy.⁴⁶

But I would suggest that there is a more relevant criterion for this generic identification: the text clearly constitutes its meaning through the deployment of literary structures recognizable as belonging to the dialogue genre. It appropriates structural and syntactic features from prominent examples of the form, thereby situating itself within a continuous generic tradition. From the very first sentence, the text announces itself as a dialogue, with allusions that serve to mark out Ciceronian dialogues in particular as explicit literary models. The parallels go beyond intertextual echoes, displaying a basic structural arrangement characteristic of Cicero's dialogues and likewise introducing into the narrative the presence of the authorial persona, another feature

conclusion that dialogues *must* do philosophy. Certainly the greater part of our corpus conforms to this model, but the strong conclusion does not hold. We can find texts which are self-consciously dialogic in form that nevertheless address different subject matter. Schmidt, "Zur Typologie," enumerates a comprehensive list of the different subtypes in early Christian literature; see above 97 n. 15. Of course, I will suggest that Sulpicius' *Gallus* self-consciously represents itself as a dialogue in form.

⁴⁵ The humor persistent throughout the text is one such indicator. Cf. esp. the conversation at *G* 1.4ff.

⁴⁶ Ascetic practice was, of course, long associated with philosophy in the ancient world. We need only think of the famous description of Socrates and his endurance of physical hardships in *Symposium* 220a-b. The Pythagorean tradition (as represented in, for example, Porphyry's *Life of Pythagoras* or Iamblichus' *On the Pythagorean Way of Life*) provides yet more prominent examples of asceticism as a philosophical way of life. The classic work on this relationship is Pierre Hadot, *Exercices spirituels et philosophie antique* (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1981). Hadot also identifies the tendency among Christian authors of late antiquity to represent Christianity itself, and especially Christian asceticism, as a kind of philosophy; see esp. Hadot, *La philosophie comme manière de vivre* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2001), 128-9. Elizabeth Clark, "Holy Women, Holy Words: Early Christian Women, Social History, and the 'Linguistic Turn'," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 6.3 (1998): 413-30 is a foundational work for many reasons, but relevant here because she highlights Gregory of Nyssa's representation of his sister Macrina as a philosopher on the basis of her ascetic and spiritual practices.

reminiscent of the Ciceronian corpus. What is more, and this should be definitive, the text explicitly gives itself the label dialogue.

Even the paratextual apparatus of the *Gallus*, such as it exists, furthers the identification of the text as a dialogue.⁴⁷ We do have a title attested in an ancient source: Jerome in his *Commentary on Ezekiel* mentions the dialogue and remarks that Sulpicius gave it the name *Gallus*.⁴⁸ That title would already mark an affinity with Ciceronian dialogue: we have already noted that these texts are very often named for one of their interlocutors. We might think of the *Brutus* or the *Laelius*, the lost *Catulus* or *Lucullus*. Our earliest manuscript, Codex Veronensis XXXVIII (36), signed and dated to 517, likewise conditions its readers to receive the *Gallus* as a dialogue. Its *incipit* labels it explicitly so: "“incipit dialogus I seueri de uita sancti martini episcopi et confessoris”".⁴⁹ Of course, this text was produced a little more than a hundred years after the initial publication of the *Gallus*. The manuscript is nevertheless the closest we can come (at least in terms of absolute chronology) to the actual experience of late ancient readers. Its paratextual cues should not be disregarded out of hand.

Of course, this identification is conditioned by the text of the *Gallus* itself. What is most interesting in this respect is the fact that—in the very midst of the conversation—the interlocutor Gallus describes the work as having the "form of a dialogue."⁵⁰ This is a strangely metatextual

⁴⁷ Titles, prefatory statements and other paratextual features regularly serve to guide readers in the reception of a work and furthermore serve as cues to genre; they are "a privileged place of a pragmatics and a strategy, of an influence on the public, an influence that ... that is at the service of a better reception for the text, Gerard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 2.

⁴⁸ Jerome, *Comm. in Ezek.*, 36, "et nuper Seuerus noster in dialogo, cui Gallo nomen imposuit."

⁴⁹ Fontaine, *Gallus*, 100.

⁵⁰ *G* 3.5.6, "speciem dialogi".

remark, one in which the voice of the external author seems to intrude on the interlocutor's own speech, eliding the distinction between discussion (internal to the text) and dialogue (that is, the text itself). Here a character in the narrative world of the *Gallus* and a participant in the conversation somehow steps outside the frame of the work to comment on its literary form. In this way, the text announces its genre, though it divorces that form from the purpose or content of the work, which Gallus describes as the "truth of history".⁵¹

In the initial scene-setting, that is in the framing narrative of the work, the *Gallus* likewise signals that it will be a dialogue—one in a distinctly Ciceronian mode—and by at least two primary devices or cues. From the very first sentence, the text announces itself as a dialogue, with allusions that serve to mark out Ciceronian dialogues in particular as explicit literary models. The parallels go beyond intertextual echoes, however, introducing into the narrative the presence of the authorial persona and displaying also a structural arrangement characteristic of Cicero's dialogues.

The linguistic parallels in the first few sentences mark out an explicit correspondence to the *mise-en-scene* established at the beginning of Cicero's *Academica Posteriora*:

Sulpicius, *Gallus*

1.1.1. Cum in unum locum ego et Gallus
conuenissemus . . . interuenit nobis
Postumianus meus

1.1.1 ante triennium patriam relinquens

Cicero, *Acad. Post. I*

1.1. In Cumano nuper cum mecum Atticus
noster esset, nuntiatum est nobis a M. Varrone
uenisse eum Roma pridie uesperi.

1.2 satis enim longo interuallo

⁵¹ G 3.6.2, "ueritatem historiae".

1.1.2. Complexi hominem amantissimum	1.1 illum complexi, ut mos amicorum est
1.1.5. huius Sulpicii mei—me autem utraque manu complectebantur	1.2. ad hunc enim ipsum—me autem dicebat
1.2.5. uerum haec, quae maeroris plena sunt, relinquamus: te potius audiamus	1.1. omitte ista quae nec percunctari nec audire sine molestia possumus, quaeso, ... et quaere potius, ecquid ipse noui
1.2.6. dein ... ita exorsus est	1.15 tum Varro ita exorsus est

Table 1⁵²

The intertexts are persistent and explicitly marked. Sulpicius with these allusions sets his dialogue within a readily discernible generic tradition and asks his readers to take those cues as a guide to the reception of the text. The parallels at the sentence level are reinforced by broader thematic correspondences: the dialogue displays a familiar rhetoric of *amicitia* and the *mise en scène* likewise evokes the Ciceronian villa dialogue, with its language of *otium* and retreat. Fontaine remarks that Sulpicius' use of "amantissimum" is reminiscent of an "expression cicéronienne d'une amitié vive."⁵³ Likewise, Sulpicius tells Postumianus, "hand yourself over to

⁵² cf. Voss, *Der Dialog*, 312.

⁵³ *G* 1.1.2; Fontaine, *Gallus* 102 n. 1. Fontaine suggests *Lael.* 104, "hominis coniunctissimi et amantissimi," as an example of this quite common usage in Cicero.

me to be embraced and enjoyed," an expression that echoes phrases of friendly affection in the dialogues of Cicero.⁵⁴

The dramatic setting of the dialogue is introduced in the voice of an external narrator, namely Sulpicius (referring to himself in the first person). Schofield has shown how the presence of the author as narrator and interlocutor in the dialogue is itself a characteristic innovation of Cicero's dialogue form.⁵⁵ Moreover, in the *Gallus*, the reader encounters two distinct levels of narrative: the external frame, in which Sulpicius is narrator and the three interlocutors (including the character of Sulpicius) are actors and speakers; likewise, a concurrent internal narrative frame, in which the three interlocutors (Postumianus and Gallus, in particular) themselves narrate accounts of Martin and the desert saints, who function therein as the primary actors. The dialogue is not depicted in the form of a drama (as with Plato's dialogues). Like Ciceronian dialogues—written in what Cicero terms the "style of Aristotle"⁵⁶—the text instead consists in a series of *orationes perpetuae*.

The correspondences are extensive and encourage the reader to consider the text within a particular generic framework. But what is interesting is not some simple classificatory label. Rather, we need to attend to the possibilities that the dialogue form presents to Sulpicius as author and how it conditions the reading experience of his audience.

Dialogue as Interruption and Interpretation: Understanding the *intermèdes gaulois*

⁵⁴ *G* 1.1.3, "conplectendum fruendumque te, remotis omnibus, trade." Fontaine, 105 n. 6 points out parallels to *Brut.* 5, *Att.* 2.1, and *Ad Q. frat.* 2.3.

⁵⁵ Malcolm Schofield, "Ciceronian Dialogue," 74-83.

⁵⁶ *de Orat.* 3.80. and *ep. ad Fam.* 1.9.23.

What we must therefore explain is why Sulpicius chooses this particular form. What opportunities does dialogue present? I would suggest that essential to answering this question is an understanding of those passages that engage most directly in dialogic conversation, namely those sections of the *Gallus* labeled *intermèdes gaulois* by Fontaine. The passages are variously construed: the first is described as “moins littéraire et plus purement morale que la précédente”; as a group, these interruptions “vont introduire au long du récit une sorte de rythme qui constitue une véritable structure en mouvement. Ils permettent de brefs, mais réels fragments de dialogue entre les interlocuteurs.”⁵⁷ This is as close as Fontaine comes to delineating the formal character of these passages. Though his definition is somewhat less precise than we might like, I think there can be little doubt that Fontaine has identified an essential structural component of the text. The only flaw with his identification is that the formal characteristics which mark these passages have not been thoroughly described. We need not rely on identifying “a sort of rhythm”. For, Sulpicius’ Latin always contains explicit markers of direct speech in these sections. We find essentially two possibilities: a simple *inquit*; or a somewhat more complex phrase begun with *ad haec* and sometimes a participle, sometimes an *inquit*.⁵⁸ These markers are external to the conversation of the interlocutors: that is to say, they are written in the narrator’s voice and function at the uppermost level of the narrative. I refine Fontaine’s definition only in order to demonstrate that Sulpicius does himself mark these passages as distinct in form. The question that naturally follows: how should they be seen to function?

Taken together, these *intermèdes* accomplish two primary ends in the *Gallus*: they serve first as a means interpreting (and even contesting) the narrative as depicted in the text, very often

⁵⁷ Fontaine, *Gallus*, 31.

⁵⁸ The first few sentences of all the *intermèdes* are collected and labeled in Appendix I, with those explicit markers of direct speech clearly highlighted for easy identification.

relating these *exempla* to explicitly local (that is, Gallic) concerns; secondly, they serve as a model for reading in an exemplary mode, demonstrating to the reader an interpretive hermeneutic founded on imitation. We might think of the *intermèdes* as performing a metatextual function: they comment on the narrative and guide the reader in the task of interpretation.⁵⁹ Not surprisingly, it is in these sections that Sulpicius' vocabulary of imitation is most densely present.⁶⁰ In the *intermèdes*, Sulpicius' interlocutors frequently and explicitly discuss the possibility of imitation, describing the narratives recounted or the individuals described as *exempla*⁶¹ or *documenta*⁶², and situating the expected reaction to these stories in terms of *imitatio*⁶³ or *aemulatio*.⁶⁴

The *intermède* at *G* 1.12 (*IG3*) illustrates these complementary functions. It is introduced by a brief *exemplum*, a story told by Postumianus about an Egyptian monastery: "In this monastery, I saw two old men who were said to have already lived there for forty years, and in fact never to have departed from it. I do not think that I should pass by all mention of these men,

⁵⁹ The term is suggested by Umberto Eco, "Lector in Fabula: Pragmatic Strategy in a Metanarrative Text," *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1979), 200-60. We need not understand the *Gallus* to be so thoroughgoing a metatext as Allais' *Une drame bien parisien* (according to Eco's interpretation) in order to notice that it has metatextual qualities, strategic passages that suggest to the reader a pragmatics of reading and guide him towards a particular reception of the text.

⁶⁰ Of course, words that imply some aspect of imitation are not limited to these sections alone. See the following footnote for a thorough list of such occurrences.

⁶¹ Here and in the next three footnotes, I collect all those passages in the *Gallus* where these terms and their derivatives appear. Those bolded (the vast majority) are found in or very near to an *intermède*: *G* **1.4.6**, **1.5.1**, **1.12.2-4**, **1.20.1**, **1.22.5**, **1.25.6**, **1.27.1**, **2.6.1**, **2.7.2-6**, 2.12.5, 3.9.3, 3.10.5, 3.14.3, **3.16.1-2**.

⁶² *G* **1.20.1**, **1.21.6**, **1.25.1**.

⁶³ *G* **1.22.6**, 2.2.5, **3.18.3**.

⁶⁴ *G* **1.18.1**, 3.10.5.

since, indeed, I heard the following statement made regarding their virtues on the testimony of the Abbot himself, and all the brethren, that in the case of one of them, the sun never beheld him eating, and in the case of the other, the sun never saw him angry."⁶⁵ As a brief aside, this story appears also in Cassian's *Institutes* and in the *Sayings of the Desert Fathers* (among those attributed to Cassian).⁶⁶ The *exemplum* has all the brevity and pith of such sayings and likewise evokes the contours of an idealized Egyptian monasticism.

It is striking, therefore, how readily Gallus uses this *exemplum* as a basis of comparison with the local situation in Gaul.⁶⁷ "If only that friend of yours—I won't say his name—were now present! I would certainly like him to hear that example."⁶⁸ Postumianus' story is directly applicable, Gallus suggests, especially to one (pointedly unnamed) character on the local scene. Gallus' *praeteritio*, is effective here: the contemporary audience must surely have been in the know (Fontaine suggests Martin's episcopal successor, Briccio),⁶⁹ but the ostensible ambiguity allows the *exemplum* to be interpreted more broadly. Gallus suggests for the reader the interpretive possibilities presented by Postumianus' story; then, the interlocutors, as this

⁶⁵ G 1.12.1, "In hoc monasterio duos ego senes uidi, qui iam per quadraginta annos ibi degere, ita ut numquam inde discesserint, ferebantur. Quorum praetereunda mihi commemoratio non uidetur, siquidem id de eorum uirtutibus et abbatis ipsius testimonio et omnium fratrum audierim sermone celebrari, quod unum eorum sol numquam uidisset epulantem, alterum numquam uidisset iratum."

⁶⁶ Philip Rousseau notes the parallel in "Cassian's Apophthegmata," *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 48/49 (2005/2006): 19-34. The parallel saying appears in Cass. *Inst.* 5.27 and in the Greek alphabetical collection under Cassian 4 (=PG 65). Wilhelm Bousset, *Apophthegmata: Studien zur Geschichte des ältesten Mönchtums* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1923), 75 suggests a common source.

⁶⁷ Note also that the brief narrative is actually labeled an *exemplum*, G 1.12.1.

⁶⁸ G 1.12.2, "O si uester ille—nolo nomen dicere—nunc adesset! Vellem admodum istud audiret exemplum."

⁶⁹ Fontaine, *Gallus*, 149 n. 8, suggests Martin's episcopal successor, Briccio.

intermède continues, themselves model the proper ethical interpretation of the exemplum.

Although Gallus' unnamed figure does not have access to Postumianus' example, cannot imitate the model or use it as a guide to ethical conduct; nevertheless, the interlocutors can. Gallus continues his interjection: "For this reason, if you allow it, I think that a certain man rightly should have been praised, because when an ungrateful freedman abandoned him, he pitied the one who left instead of attacking him. And, indeed, he was not even angry with the man who took him away."⁷⁰ In the section which follows, we learn the identity of this "certain man" (*quendam*), for Sulpicius remarks: "If Postumianus had not given us that example of overcoming anger, I would have been deeply angered by the fugitive's departure. But because it is not permitted to be angry, all remembrance of such things, as it annoys us, should be dispelled."⁷¹ Sulpicius, then, is the man Gallus has just described. In this passage, as a character partaking in the dialogue, Sulpicius himself enacts a performance of exemplary imitation: he uses Postumianus' *exemplum* in concert with Gallus' re-interpretation as a guide to ethical conduct. Here, then, is a simple but clearly marked instance in which the text itself models for the reader—through these *intermèdes gaulois*—the process of exemplary imitation that we discussed above.

Of course, the different passages perform these two functions to varying degrees. It should be noted that all of them are particularly marked by a persistent vocabulary of imitation. Of course, they are surrounded by exempla: *IG3*, *IG4* and *IG8* offer straightforward interpretations of obviously exemplary deeds; however, in each of these instances the *exempla*

⁷⁰ *G* 1.12.3, "Vnde quendam, si agnoscis, censeo iure laudandum, quod, cum eum libertus deseruerit ingratus, miseratus est potius quam insectatus abeuntem. Sed neque illi irascitur, a quo uidetur abductus."

⁷¹ *G* 1.12.4, "Nisi Postumianus prodidisset exemplum, grauiter irascerer discessionem fugitiui; sed quia irasci non libet, tota istorum commemoratio, quae nos compungit, abolenda est."

are primarily directed at an audience seemingly incapable of or resistant to ethical imitation. *IG3* does, however, model in the character of Sulpicius the possibilities of successful exemplary imitation. *IG5* and *IG6* take as their primary concern the comparison of Martin and the monks of Egypt, explicitly making the case that Martin in his singular person embodies the sum of the virtues which Postumianus recounted in the desert monks. Martin seems in some ways to imitate them (or at the very least compare to them), but these passages suggest that in that very act of imitation, he surpasses the ascetic powers of the eastern monks. *IG5* likewise evinces a dense web of exemplary imitation, in which Gallus takes up models of humility and obedience, thereby figuring the task of hagiographical composition as a form of ascetic imitation.⁷² *IG1* and *IG7* themselves form a logical pair: their similarities are marked by textual resonances and even explicit references. Likewise, in both passages, the instabilities of exemplary discourse are brought to the fore, thereby revealing an example's inherent potential for contestation and questioning. *IG2* evinces a similar insistence on debate and contradiction, even if its form is less complex.

Though both *IG1* and *IG7* discuss *exempla* firmly situated within a biblical typology, nevertheless the ethical evaluation of the models represented is not consistently approving. Indeed, the distinct impression remains that no small number of these *exempla* are impossible or at the very least difficult to imitate. They require at the very least creative re-interpretation. The passages of dialogue thus come to serve as a means for the imagined reader to approach and eventually interpret the complex motions of imitation which the text depicts. These *intermèdes gaulois* allow Sulpicius to comment on and offer a corrective to the local situation in Gaul. In so doing, he paints a picture of Gallic asceticism which seems in its broad strokes to reflect the

⁷² On this, see the following section, 118-24 below.

idealized representations of Egyptian monks, but which on closer inspection is revealed to be rather more muddled than was originally apparent. Though the *Gallus* foremost depicts an ideal western holy man, one who seems easily to surpass the heights of virtue scaled by the Egyptian monks, nevertheless, it likewise suggests a particular image of Gallic religious practice which is in a marked state of flux. The dialogic interruptions allow Sulpicius to underscore these tensions inherent to exemplary discourse, to model for the reader the possibilities and pitfalls of ethical imitation.

The exemplary deeds which holy men perform are rarely straightforward. The dialogue form allows Sulpicius as author to acknowledge that fact, allows him to model for the reader the interpretive possibilities that *exempla* provide. Dialogue affords Sulpicius the ability to depict an internal audience, which interprets and responds to the exemplary character of the text. The figure of the reader—an imagined and ideal audience—plays an increasingly important role in the *Gallus*, as the text models a particular kind of interpretive response to ascetic *exempla*. Let us therefore briefly remind ourselves about the progressively more prominent figure of the reader in Sulpicius' Martinian corpus, before we describe the role of the reader as represented in the *Gallus*.

How to Read the Saints: The Figure of the Reader in the *Gallus*

In the *Life of Martin*, Sulpicius' readers are wholly external to the narrative world of the text. They occupy no place in the narrative space of the *Life*: never is some imagined reader a participant in Martin's *virtus*, a beneficiary of his miraculous deeds. To the extent that the figure of the reader or the practice of reading is addressed, it is only in the paratextual or supplemental

sections appended to the work's beginning and end.⁷³ There we find Sulpicius giving his reader some instruction in the hermeneutics of his saintly subject, detailing, that is, the proper interpretive approach to Martin and his miracles. In the letters, Sulpicius goes yet further, setting out quite explicitly a programme of reading founded on exemplarity. Moreover, he does so in a genre which dramatizes the practice of reading. The letter's recipient has a distinct place in the text's narrative space. The primary reader is directly addressed and, as we have seen, even participates in the act of making the text meaningful.⁷⁴ What is more, that reader is shown to benefit—by the very act of reading—from the saint's intercession. Indeed, Sulpicius suggests that readers (and likewise writers) whose literary endeavors comprehend Martin within the proper exemplary framework will thereby be able to experience themselves the saint's presence.

It is in the *Gallus*, however, that Sulpicius gives the figure of the reader its fullest expression. The dialogue form allows Sulpicius to dramatize a hagiographer's audience engaged in the very act of reading (or hearing, as the case may be) about Martin and other holy men: that is to say, Sulpicius is able to model for his external readers the programme of exemplary reading outlined earlier in the corpus. We witness this interpretive practice as performed by an internal audience in the narrative world of the text. It is fitting in a dialogue like the *Gallus*, where the naratee is so dramatically foregrounded, that Sulpicius' programme of exemplary reading is also most clearly represented. The form of the work serves to buttress its interpretive context. In a text deeply concerned with the practice of reading, we see a character patterning for the external audience the ideal interpretive approach to narratives of Martin and other holy men.

⁷³ See above, Chapter II 63-67.

⁷⁴ See above, Chapter II, 68-73.

Before the first of the *intermèdes*, Postumianus has narrated his arrival on the shores of Cyrene and his encounter with a saintly old man living in the wilderness like an ancient prophet and clad in a garment of skin like John the Baptist. That old man in the desert is found to be Christian himself. There follows a meal described, very much tongue-in-cheek, as *locupletissimum*: it consists in half a loaf of bread and a bundle of herbs.⁷⁵ Just as Postumianus has finished describing this particularly abstemious lunch, Sulpicius takes the opportunity presented to tease his heretofore silent friend, the Gaul. The voice of the narrator —Sulpicius' voice—here intervenes on the hypodiegetic account of Postumianus. Sulpicius laughs in anticipation of his joke and then—in direct speech, as an interlocutor—asks Gallus what he would make of such a meal.⁷⁶ Gallus, described as *uerecundissimus*, blushes as he takes Sulpicius' joke in good humor, before he responds in defense of his countrymen's well-known love for food.⁷⁷

This section of dialogue directly addresses (though not without some humor) the suitability of the Cyrenian monk as an *exemplum*. Can Gallus—and by extension, the reader—imitate his model? Should he? Here, the meager diet of the Cyrenian is compared to the apparent gluttony of the Gauls. That connection is established also syntactically in the repetition of the *dimidium panem* and *fasciculum herbae* from Postumianus' original account. Sulpicius asks: "What then, Gallus? Is a bundle of herbs and half a loaf of bread pleasing as lunch for five

⁷⁵ 1.4.4.

⁷⁶ 1.4.5, "Quid, inquam, Galle, placetne prandium fasciculus herbarum et panis dimidius uiris quinque?"

⁷⁷ 1.4.5, "Tum ille, sicut est uerecundissimus, aliquantulum erubescens dum fatigationem meam accipit."

men?"⁷⁸ The humor is found in the ironic *quid*, which indicates the expected response: of course not.

Thus Gallus. He acknowledges the joke and then accuses Sulpicius (with some irony) of acting *inhumane* when he compels the Gauls to live *exemplo angelorum*.⁷⁹ Indeed, Gallus' response underscores the striking differences between the ascetic expectations of these very human Gallic monks and the *angeli* of the eastern deserts. Even this very label seems to mark them as un-Gauls (*an-geli*). Nevertheless, Gallus in protest asserts (tentatively, in a subjunctive concessive clause) that even angels must eat: this Cyrenian starves himself either by necessity or by nature, Postumianus because he is sick from all the tossing at sea.⁸⁰ The result is a passage which serves as guide to the reader's interpretation of an exemplary model. The suggestion, of course, is that the Cyrenian—at least in respect of his eating habits—is not a particularly suitable *exemplum* either for Gallus or the assumed reader (even if the consistent irony seems at times to undermine this conclusion).

What gives this interpretation further nuance, however, is the conclusion to Postumianus' account. On the following day, this Cyrenian monk is revealed to have hidden the fact that he is himself a priest and to have done so *summa ... dissimulatione*.⁸¹ He obfuscates his own virtue,

⁷⁸ G 1.4.5.

⁷⁹ G 1.4.6, "Facis, inquit, Sulpici, tuo more, qui nullam occasionem, sui qua tibi porrecta fuerit, omittis, quin nos edacitatis fatiges. Sed facis inhumane, qui nos Gallos homines cogis exemplo angelorum uiuere—quamquam ego studio manducandi etiam angelos manducare credam: nam istum dimidium hordeacium timeo uel solus adtingere."

⁸⁰ G 1.4.7, "Sed contentus sit hoc Cyrenensis ille, cui uel necessitas uel natura est esurire, uel postremum isti, quibus, credo, marina iactatio inedia cibi fecerat!"

⁸¹ G 1.5.3, "Ceterum postero die, cum aliqui ex incolis ad nos uisendos confluere coepissent, cognoscimus illum hospitem nostrum esse presbyterum, quod summa nos dissimulatione celauerat."

denies himself any honour, even that which might be his due. This revelation serves to mark his exemplary virtue not as abstinence so much as humility. A reconsideration of the preceding *intermède gaulois* might then reveal that Gallus has in a rather more profound way followed the Cyrenian's example quite closely, and not despite the fact that he rejected its apparent suitability, but rather because of it. The text is quite explicit here: Gallus is *uerecundissimus* (not so much 'ashamed' as 'modest'). In this respect, then, he is very much like the Cyrenian. Gallus knows that he is not, cannot be an *angelus*: "As I have often told you, we are Gauls."⁸² His modesty—attested here and elsewhere in the dialogue—is the surest guide of how best a reader might interpret the exemplary character of the models presented in the text.

In other sections of the dialogue, too, we see that the eponymous character Gallus serves as a model, becomes for the audience an exemplary reader of *exempla*. In a text full of ethical models, this character patterns for the reader how to read in an exemplary mode. I shall here consider one crucial moment in the text, which comes just as the interlocutors explicitly address the virtues of Martin for the first time. The character Postumianus, having now told of his travels among the monks of the eastern deserts, readily agrees with Sulpicius that Martin embodies each and every of those virtues attributed to the individual eastern monks. In this way, Martin imitates. By that imitation, however, he exceeds.

Sulpicius then asks Gallus (to this point, only an occasional speaker) to tell the virtuous deeds of Martin. Gallus is reluctant, but feels obligated. Indeed, he adduces as his own model a series of *exempla* which Postumianus had earlier recounted. "Clearly, said Gallus, though I am unequal to so great a task, nevertheless I am compelled by the examples of obedience related above by Postumianus not to refuse that duty which you impose." This direct reference to a

⁸² 1.4.7, "quod tibe saepe testatus sum, Galli sumus."

series of *exempla* from Postumianus' narrative, a reference marked doubly by explicit textual correspondence, serves to construct a link between the obedience of the desert ascetics and Gallus' own performance of obedience. Gallus aims to follow the injunction to imitation by obeying Sulpicius' request of him, a request which Sulpicius also frames as a sort of obedience to Martin himself. Here the dialogue form allows the interlocutor—an internal audience—to model for the reader—an external audience—the process of exemplary imitation. Moreover, that exemplary imitation manifests in the practice of writing. Gallus will write—or perhaps better, re-write—the life of Martin and in so doing imitate by his obedience the exemplary models offered earlier in the text. His is an obedience which consists essentially in literary composition.

Gallus' hagiographical composition itself thus comes to be figured as an ascetic repetition of sorts, set in a like category to the miraculous actions of the obedient monks. Indeed, by the very act of representing a holy man, he engages in his own performance of Christian virtue. For, like the monks he takes as his model, Gallus is himself made an example of obedience, acquiescing to Sulpicius' demands just as a novice monk to his abbot. But that acquiescence comes also with overtures of humility, much as in the first *intermède*.⁸³ For, Gallus claims an inadequacy of speech, a common trope no doubt, but one which—as Derek Krueger has shown—is expressly used in the hagiographical literature of Late Antiquity as a means of representing and reproducing the virtues of humility and obedience. Such assertions “are ascetic performances, expressions of piety expressed through rhetoric.”⁸⁴ What more compelling portrait of a late ancient reader than one who enacts in his own life—even with his own life—the content of his reading?

⁸³ 1.27.2, “Sed dum cogito me hominem Gallum inter Aquitanos uerba facturum, uereor ne offendat uestras nimium urbanas aures sermo rusticior.” Cf. 1.4.5.

⁸⁴ Derek Krueger, *Writing and Holiness*, 221.

In this way therefore, Gallus emulates those models Postumianus had earlier recounted; at the same time, however, he points also to a yet more compelling exemplar: “If you have conceded to me that I was a disciple of Martin, grant me this also, that I be allowed under the shelter of his example to despise the vain trappings of speech and ornaments of words.” Gallus’ simplicity of speech will mirror Martin’s simplicity of life. And of course, the repetition will be double. For, not only will his account reproduce the form of Martin’s life—in its humble style—but it will also reproduce its content: Martin will himself be the subject of Gallus’ forthcoming narrative. The act of hagiographical composition in this text comes to be represented, then, within this far-reaching complex of exemplary reading. The text asks and even begins to answer how one should read saintly models. Read them, in order to write, and in that way live them.

In Sulpicius’ Martinian corpus, we can therefore trace a relatively straightforward trajectory. In the conclusion to the *Life*, Sulpicius imagines the responses occasioned by reading the text and begins to set out a method for reading Martin. In the *Letters*, he demonstrates how to interpret the text through the lens of suitable *exempla*, and moreover, makes clear the fruits of proper reading, namely Martin’s intercession. In the *Gallus*, the readerly model is taken yet further: Sulpicius shows how readers can themselves become authors of a saintly life. The hagiographer himself becomes a model for readers, and the act of producing hagiography becomes an essential first link in the chain of saintly imitation.

Conclusion

The *Gallus* is a text which demand from its audience a participatory practice of reading founded on exemplary imitation, founded on the endless loop of ethical reproduction which characterizes

both the actions of the holy man and the expected reactions of the reader. The narrative structure of the dialogue, marked as it is by repetition and reproduction, echoes the interpretive program which Sulpicius advocates throughout the Martinian corpus. This multi-volume hagiography writes its end not with a closed text, a text whose narrative and whose meaning is somehow final; rather, the *Gallus* depicts a series of seemingly endless saintly episodes, themselves endlessly reproducible. Martin's holy deeds and sayings, the deeds of the desert saints whose stories too are told in this text, they all refer implicitly (and at times explicitly) to yet more deeds and sayings in this and other works and likewise in the conditioned response of the reader. The dialogue consistently turns back on itself, looping one narrative into another, thereby modelling for its reader an interpretive program which demands exemplary reading. Put most simply, the *Gallus* shows its reader how to read.

Indeed, that formal literary trajectory which we began to trace in the first chapter comes to its logical conclusion in this dialogue. For, it is here that Sulpicius' character—the primary narrator of the text and the assumed voice of the external author—takes a step back and affords readers of Martin's *Life* and letters the opportunity to write and re-write their own life of a holy man. The *Gallus*, which marks the culmination of Sulpicius' literary programme in the Martinian corpus, is likewise the text where the figure of the reader participates most directly in the narrative, even its composition. A reader of Sulpicius' earlier hagiographical literature—represented here in the person of the text's eponymous interlocutor Gallus—is given a voice with which to contest and interpret hagiographical narratives, even a voice with which to construct his own version of Martin's life. Depicted as an ideal reader in the first half of the dialogue, Gallus himself takes up the hagiographer's pen in the second half, supplementing yet further the *Life of Martin*.

The reader of Sulpicius' text encounters the interlocutors evaluating the models presented; there, the reader first glimpses the possibilities of ethical imitation; there, the reader finds a text which takes seriously this iterative process of self-identification. For, inherent to the project of exemplary imitation is the attempt to define the parameters of a Gallic ascetic *uirtus* both according to and in competition with prior models. Postumianus' account of his travels in Egypt serves to instigate those dialogic interruptions in which the interlocutors—Gallus especially—at times consent to and at others contest the exempla described in the text. These interruptions, addressed as they are to stories that evince an idealized eastern practice of monasticism, are potent because they bring that foreign world to bear on the issues which concern pro-Martinian ascetics in Gaul. The *intermèdes gaulois* which occasionally intrude on Postumianus' *oratio* show this discursive performance in the very process of its enactment. They ask and even begin to answer the question of how one should read saintly models. How should the reader evaluate and imitate the memorable words and deeds of holy men? In this dialogue (because it is a dialogue), the interlocutors, Gallus especially, exemplify this very practice.

Chapter IV

IMITATION AND EXEMPLARITY IN THE *GALLUS*

For Sulpicius Severus, reading implies—even demands—imitation. A reader cannot but imitate the subjects, the exemplars he encounters in a text. If to write of a saint is to construct in literary form an exemplary model of ethical conduct, then to read of a saint is to reconstruct that model in one's own life. This expectation—namely that the reader play an active role not only in understanding and in interpreting the text, but also in constituting that text in life as an ethical performance—is an assumption which undergirds much of the Christian literature of late antiquity, particularly so-called hagiography. Such is naturally the case with the figure of Martin, fourth century bishop of Tours, whose exemplary *uirtus* Sulpicius takes as the essential content of his literary dialogue, the *Gallus*.¹ Already we have seen that Sulpicius expects his readers to encounter the Martinian corpus as active participants, to generate textual meaning by supplying the proper subtext.² In particular, he expects his readers to understand exemplary holy men in the context of prior examples, just as he expects his readers to take this text as an *exemplum* of their own.

Nevertheless, we might readily understand how the miraculous deeds of holy men present something of a problem both for the reader and for the author. Despite the powerful ethical

¹ cf. Fontaine, *Gallus*, 51-6. To the *Gallus*, Fontaine has even appended the subtitle “Dialogues sur les <<vertus>> de Saint Martin”. This is essentially a modern addition, though one ninth century manuscript reads, “incipit II postimiani de uirtutibus mon(achorum)”. See Fontaine, 100. Even disregarding the paratextual evidence, there can be no debate about the importance of the concept of *uirtus* in the text, the word appearing as it does (according to a CLCLT search) a total of 74 times.

² See above, Chapters II and III.

possibilities of imitation, the saint remains a figure who cannot himself be fully imitated, and in two respects. Of course, the *Life of Martin* relates miracles almost excessive in their saintly extravagance: the wholesale demolition of pagan shrines,³ the casting out of demons,⁴ multiple healings,⁵ even resurrection.⁶ Martin's deeds are so marvelous as to be simply impossible for the reader to replicate. Moreover, his virtues are so numerous, Sulpicius claims, that they cannot all possibly be recounted in a single text: not only did that holy man seek to hide his virtue, but he effected such an abundance of miraculuous deeds that the reader might grow weary who is forced to consider them all.⁷ Martin is to some extent both inimitable and unrepresentable.

I would suggest that this dialogue represents an attempt to work out these very problems of imitation. In the first chapter, we saw that the *Gallus* is the culmination of a literary project begun with the *Life of Martin*. It is an explicit attempt to address the second problem: with this dialogue, Sulpicius will undertake a literary venture by which he might supplement the already lengthy list of Martin's remarkable words and deeds.⁸ But, it is likewise more than that. The *Gallus* explores the possibilities of the ethical imitation of a saintly exemplar. That is to say, it represents an attempt to address that first problem, namely the (im)possibility of enacting the

³ *VM* 11.

⁴ *VM* 17.

⁵ *VM* 16, 19.

⁶ *VM* 7, 8.

⁷ *VM* 1.7-8, "nequaquam ad omnia illius potuerim pervenire adeo ea in quibus ipse tantum sibi conscius fuit nesciuntur quia laudem ab hominibus non requirens quantum in ipso fuit omnes virtutes suas latere voluisset. Quamquam etiam ex his quae conperta nobis erant plura omisimus quia sufficere credidimus si tantum excellentia notarentur."

⁸ The interlocutor Gallus, before beginning his account of Martin's *uirtutes* explains his desire to avoid repeating what Sulpicius has already written: *G* 1.27.7, "Cauendum mihi inprimis esse arbitror ne ea de Martini uirtutibus repetam quae in libro suo Sulpicius iste memorauit."

saintly text in the performance of one's own life. Peter Brown—though writing in a somewhat different context—has noted of late ancient Christianity: “A society that wanted nothing less than saints seems to have paid insufficient attention to the gradual improvement of sinners.”⁹ The *Gallus*, I suggest, is one means by which Sulpicius attends to that very improvement.

As I have already suggested, the imitation of ethical *exempla* has an ancient history in the literature of antiquity. Indeed, scholars have long registered—if only obliquely—the fact that much of Christian ascetic practice is founded on the imitation of ethical or behavioral models.¹⁰ Peter Brown has gone somewhat further, tracing the use of the saint as *exemplum* to a classical tradition of *paideia*.¹¹ That is to say, he demonstrates how the attempt to realize the image of God in man is very much in concert with, though nevertheless a conscious replacement for, the traditional Roman impulse to “make persons into classics”.¹² This particular formulation is instructive, I think, and in a way that Brown did not fully elaborate. Just as the foundational texts of the classical tradition are literary models, so the saint is written as an example for those who would themselves be holy. Indeed, what guarantees the status of the *classic* is its reception; literary successors, by imitating, amending, even excelling their original, affirm the position of their predecessors. Likewise, that saint is most holy who inspires emulation, and he occasions by

⁹ Peter Brown, *Religion and Society in the Age of Saint Augustine* (London: Faber and Faber, 1972), 334.

¹⁰ Such discussions tend to be perfunctory. Among others, cf. Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire*, 57. She suggests that “written *Lives* provided the guidelines for the construction of a specifically Christian self . . . Written *Lives* were mimetic; real ascetic discipline in turn imitated the written lives.” See also Krueger, *Writing and Holiness*, 108, who comments, “late antique Christian hagiography provided textual models for emulation and invited an audience to conform to the patterns of virtue narrated.”

¹¹ Peter Brown, “The Saint as Exemplar.”

¹² *ibid.*, 21.

his virtue the possibility of salvation (if not sanctity) for those who would be like him. What guarantees the status of a saint is his reception. For Sulpicius (as for so many authors in antiquity), this reception consists essentially in creative expressions of imitation. When a text is rendered a *classic*, it has therefore already become a model in the most practical of senses. A similar process is at work, Brown suggests, when a person becomes a *classic*.

Brown's choice of language here is evocative (and no doubt carefully chosen). There is a marked affinity between persons and texts in the ancient tradition of writing and rehearsing *exempla*. Though he is never explicit about the inherent textuality of (what other scholars have termed) exemplary discourse,¹³ Brown implies a great deal when he marks historical figures and rhetorical figures both as potential *classics*. For, the holy man and the hero exist to the reader only as a collection of words and sentences and paragraphs. And of course, the very best models inspire a sort of two-fold imitation: the beautiful ordering of words serves as a literary model for those who would imitate the author's language, while the beautiful ordering of a life serves as an ethical model for those who would imitate the subject's virtue.

That Sulpicius' Martinian corpus managed both successfully can hardly be doubted. The proliferation of Martinian literature through the entire breadth of the middle ages is ample evidence of the former;¹⁴ his consistently popular cult is our best evidence of the latter.¹⁵ But,

¹³ This formulation is from Matthew Roller, "Exemplarity in Roman Culture: The Case of Horatius Cocles and Cloelia," *Classical Philology* 99.1 (2004): 5. This concept will be discussed more fully below, pp. 6-13.

¹⁴ Venantius Fortunatus in the sixth century wrote a narrative poem, the *Vita Sancti Martini*, in four books of hexameters. Gregory of Tours around the same time collected stories of Martin into his *De uirtutibus sancti Martini episcopi*. A recent monograph treats this broader corpus of Martinian literature, called the "Martinellus": Meinolf Vielberg, *Der Mönchsbischof von Tours im "Martinellus". Zur Form des hagiographischen Dossiers und seines spätantiken Leitbilds* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006).

this is all subsequent and coincidental to Sulpicius's own project. Rather, what makes the Martinian corpus so compelling a model of exemplary discourse is the fact that Sulpicius persistently writes these mimetic impulses into his texts, particularly the *Gallus*. Indeed, this dialogue allows Sulpicius the opportunity to engage in a fully realized rhetoric of exemplarity. For, the generic form of the work guarantees an internal audience which itself participates in the exemplary discourse, evaluating and imitating models recounted elsewhere in the text. What is more, Sulpicius figures the literary performance of dialogue itself as a moral venture governed by the structures of exemplarity. The interlocutor Gallus explicitly attributes the purpose, content and form of his speech to exemplary models. I suggest that the *Gallus* proposes and even itself performs an ascetic practice at the level of reading, a practice which stresses the value—even the necessity—of imitation and the importance of *exempla* as a guide to ethical conduct. We will likewise see that, for Sulpicius, this exemplary imitation is itself bound up in textual practice. It manifests especially in discursive performances, in writing, reading and dialogue.

The Latin tradition of *exempla*

No small number of ancient authors have themselves adduced the importance of exemplary models as guides for ethical conduct. At Rome, the practice of imitating *exempla*, one's ancestral

¹⁵ The standard work on Tours and its Christian sites of worship is Luce Pietri, *La ville de Tours du IV^e au VI^e siècle. Naissance d'une cité Chrétienne* (Rome: École Française de Rome, 1983). Gregory of Tours describes the new basilica built by the bishop Perpetuus (461-90) in honour of Martin, *Libri Historiarum*, 2.14. Martin was a favoured saint at the Merovingian court and his popularity continued well into the Carolingian period: Alcuin in 796 was appointed by Charlemagne abbot at Marmoutier, the abbey Martin himself founded four hundred years earlier. Renovations and renewals of that abbey continued throughout the middle ages, until its eventual disestablishment in 1799.

imagines in particular, is deeply ingrained.¹⁶ Of course, men themselves—fathers especially—can be *exempla*, but so too can representations of them: the *locus classicus* for this notion is Polybius’ description of aristocratic funerals, in which the display of ancestor masks is held to promote ethical imitation.¹⁷ This quality extends also to literature, as Cicero argues in his *Pro Archia*—a forensic oration delivered on behalf of a former teacher in a citizenship trial, which likewise made an impassioned defense of the value of literary composition and education:

But all books are full of this, and all the sayings of philosophers, and ancient history too is full of *exempla*, which would be cast in the shadows, did not the light of literature shine on them. How many *imagines* representing the bravest men have both the Greek and Latin writers left for us, not merely to look upon, but also to imitate! And I, always setting them before my eyes in the performance of public duty, have formed my heart and my mind by reflection on those excellent men.¹⁸

Cicero is keenly aware of the exemplary quality of literature; that is to say, he is aware that the *imagines* of great men can be—in fact, should be—the objects not only of contemplation (*intuendum*) but also of imitation (*imitandum*). Here he argues for the formative role that such *exempla* have played in his own performance of civic duties. Indeed, throughout the vast literary remains left by Cicero, we can discern, as Henriette Van Der Blom has recently shown, a

¹⁶ Still useful on this topic is H.W. Litchfield, “National *Exempla Virtutis* in Roman Literature,” *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 25 (1914):1-71. A more recent treatment is K.J. Hölkesskamp, “*Exempla* und *mos maiorum*: Überlegungen zum kollektiven Gedächtnis der Nobilität,” in *Vergangenheit und Lebenswelt: Soziale Kommunikation, Traditionsbildung und Historisches Bewusstsein*, eds. H.-J. Gehrke und A. Möller, 301-38. On the use of *exempla* in specific authors, especially the historians, see below.

¹⁷ *Pol. Hist.* 6.53-55.

¹⁸ *Pro Archia*, 14.2-4, “Sed pleni omnes sunt libri, plenae sapientium voces, plena exemplorum vetustas: quae iacerent in tenebris omnia, nisi litterarum lumen accederet. Quam multas nobis imagines—non solum ad intuendum, verum etiam ad imitandum—fortissimorum virorum expressas scriptores et Graeci et Latini reliquerunt? Quas ego mihi semper in administranda re publica proponens animum et mentem meam ipsa cogitatione hominum excellentium conformabam.”

consistent and seemingly conscious effort to shape a political strategy for public life according to carefully chosen models.¹⁹ As a particularly successful *homo nouus*, Cicero, though by no means the first to adopt such diverse *exempla* from outside the boundaries of family and class, is significant of a broadening of the exemplary discourse beyond the ancestral *imagines*, appeal to which had long been the traditional means of enacting elite identity in a civic context.

These exemplary assumptions are especially prominent in Roman historiography. Sallust, Livy, Tacitus all claim such a function for their histories.²⁰ The past is explicitly written as model for ethical behavior. The *Preface* to Livy's *Ab Urbe Condita*—prominent, but by no means unique in this context—evinces the importance of an exemplary discourse in the writing and reading of Roman history:

For, in the study of history, it is especially improving and beneficial to contemplate examples of every kind of behavior, which are set out on a clear monument. From it you can extract for yourself and your commonwealth both what is worthy of imitation and what you should avoid because it is rotten from start to finish.²¹

In this, his programmatic statement, Livy formulates an exemplary schema which even employs the same essential vocabulary as Cicero in his *Pro Archia*, marking out the importance of contemplation (*intueri*) followed by imitation (*imitere*); of course, he likewise notes that the past can offer the reader also negative *exempla* best avoided (*uites*). For Livy, not only does history collect for the reader a series of exemplary models; from it, the reader also can take up those

¹⁹ An excellent recent treatment is Henriette Van Der Blom, *Cicero's Role Models: The Political Strategy of a Newcomer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

²⁰ Sall. *Bell. Jug.* 4.7; Liv. *praef.*10 (see below); Tac. *Ann.* 3.6.

²¹ Liv., *praef.* 10, “Hoc illud est praecipue in cognitione rerum salubre ac frugiferum omnis te exempli documenta in inlustri posita monumento intueri; inde tibi tuaeque rei publicae quod imitere capias, inde foedum inceptu foedum exitu quod uites.”

models for imitation and avoidance, models by which the present might be defined according to some memory of the past. Jane Chaplin has recently shown how “Livy’s *History* can profitably be read as an extended enactment of his programmatic statement.”²² She has shown, that is, how the very actors in Livy’s history regularly seek out *exempla* for the purpose of ethical guidance and therefore serve as models not only of a particular virtue, but models also of the discursive practice of ethical imitation. In the Roman historiographical tradition, history—conceived doubly as the events of the past and the writings which describe them—gives meaning to the present.

Chaplin’s work is emblematic of what might be called an exemplary turn in recent scholarship on Roman historiography.²³ Scholars are returning to the didactic and pragmatic qualities of history writing—an approach long conventional, but disregarded by many modern historians²⁴—and have begun to recognize that *exempla* offer more than a simple binary which marks deeds as straightforwardly good or bad.²⁵ Rather, they are useful discursive tools for *thinking with*. Indeed, Matthew Roller has demonstrated the extent to which “the socioethical dynamics of exemplarity are fundamental to Roman historical consciousness itself.”²⁶ He sees in the Roman use of *exempla* a discourse which links actions, audiences, values and memory,

²² Jane Chaplin, *Livy’s Exemplary History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 2.

²³ See esp. William Turpin, “Tacitus, Stoic *exempla* and the *praecipuum munus annalium*,” *Classical Antiquity* 27.2 (2008): 359-404; Matthew Roller, “Exemplarity in Roman Culture: The Case of Horatius Cocles and Cloelia,” *Classical Philology* 99.1 (2004): 1-56; Roller, “The Exemplary Past in Roman Historiography and Culture,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Roman Historians*, A. Feldherr, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 214-30; and on a late ancient historian, Gavin Kelly, *Ammianus Marcellinus: The Allusive Historian* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), especially chapter 6, “The Exemplary Historian”.

²⁴ cf. Turpin, “Tacitus,” 359-60.

²⁵ Roller, “The Exemplary Past,” explains this in terms of an opposition between “exemplary” and “historicist” views of the past, 214-16.

²⁶ Roller, “Exemplarity,” 7.

suggesting that one can discern in this exemplary discourse a schema which explains the (discursively constructed) social function of such literary products.

The prevalence of exemplary models in Roman historiography is echoed also in the moral philosophy of Seneca, whose writing on Stoic conceptions of the good in fact serves as a rather edifying comparandum to Sulpicius' representation of *uirtus* in the Martinian corpus.²⁷ For both authors, literature and the reader's engagement with it is an essential guide to virtuous action. For Seneca, this is not least because the world as we perceive it holds no perfect models of goodness. Brad Inwood, who has done essential work parsing the relationship between literary issues and moral philosophy in Seneca, has shown just how relevant the tradition of virtuous past action (as received in literature) is to Seneca's conception of the good.²⁸ Inwood suggests that, as Seneca understands it, we can begin to attain a "notion of perfect goodness" from "imperfect but laudable agents . . . by careful abstraction from their acts" and moreover that essential in this process is the "role of an ideal or perfect agent (uninstantiated or attested only in literary tradition)

²⁷ It would be reasonable enough to assume that Sulpicius had read Seneca even if we had no positive evidence suggesting as much, but there is a passage in the *Gallus* that seems to echo quite closely the phrasing of one of Seneca's letters. The interlocutor Sulpicius, upon Postumianus' arrival, invites his recently-arrived friend to conversation and fellowship, saying, "te intuear, te audiam, tecum loquar, nullo penitus in secretum nostrum, quod nobis haec remotior cellula praestat admisso," *G* 1.1.4. This seems to be a strong allusion to Seneca, *ep.* 27.1: "sic itaque me audi, tamquam mecum loquar. In secretum te meum admitto et te adhibito me cum exigo." The intertextual function of this allusion is actually quite relevant to our discussion: in the letter, Seneca addresses the possibility of attaining goodness by the study of literature, though he illustrates his point by means of a negative *exemplum*, a certain Sabinus, the sum of whose knowledge trailed by far the sums in his bank account. Rich as he was, he bought a stable of slaves, each to memorize the work of a different foundational poet of ancient literature, one Homer, another Hesiod, one each to the nine lyric poets, 27.6. "Sabinus figured that what a member of his household knew, he knew also." He is of course proved spectacularly wrong by the end of Seneca's brief narrative. Though illustrated in a figure who sorely lacks any sense of what is good, the assumption underlying this amusing exemplary episode is that literature—especially the toil to know it well and the joy attendant in that knowledge—is a means of getting to goodness.

²⁸ See especially, Brad Inwood, "Getting to Goodness," in *Reading Seneca: Stoic Philosophy at Rome* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), 271-301.

in focusing our attention and helping to distinguish those features which constitute goodness."²⁹ Inwood points to Seneca's use of such famous historical figures as Horatius or Fabricius in *ep.* 120, showing how they can serve an exemplary function, even if they are not themselves perfect sages.³⁰ At the same time, the few perfect sages who have existed are accessible only through tradition, only through the literature that describes. "Socrates (and in this Cato is similar) is cognitively available to Seneca (and to us) as an exemplar because of the rich narrative concerning him and because of his special status in the philosophical tradition . . . He is, through this literary tradition, as available to us as the ordinary characters we actually do experience."³¹ The literary representation of a perfect sage has practical moral value, not because a figure like Socrates or Cato is directly imitable, but because they help us to delineate notions of goodness: "Our imperfect world will only yield a model of perfection when it is scrutinized against a standard higher and more purer than we can ever meet in our experiences."³²

What is most compelling about Inwood's discussion of Seneca, at least for our purposes here, is the extent to which Sulpicius' presentation of *uirtus* in the *Gallus* seems to reflect a similar engagement with exemplary goodness. The desert monks of Egypt are not themselves perfectly good, but some of their deeds as represented in literature (like those of Horatius and Fabribius in Seneca's *ep.* 120) are practical examples of *uirtus*. Martin is of course like the Stoic sage in this comparison, in that he is an example of perfect goodness, a whetstone with which we might sharpen our own understanding of virtue, even if his perfection renders him perfectly

²⁹ *ibid.*, 299-300.

³⁰ *ibid.*, 289.

³¹ *ibid.*, 295.

³² *ibid.*, 300.

inimitable.³³ We will consider the place of Martin in Sulpicius' exemplary discourse more fully below. For now, suffice it to say that Sulpicius' use of exemplary discourse is rooted in a traditionally Roman understanding of literature and its role in attaining moral virtue.

Roller proposes a schema for understanding the function of exemplary discourse in the Roman historical consciousness. An *exemplum* comprises four primary components: i) an action which is considered consequential for the Roman community at large, and admitting of ethical categorization; ii) an audience of eyewitnesses who observe this action, place it in a suitable ethical category and judge it accordingly; iii) commemoration of the deed by a monument, whose aim is to make the deed more widely visible to secondary audiences; and iv) imitation, namely the expectation that any spectator to such a deed will attempt to reproduce the deed himself.³⁴ Roller's schema "exposes what Romans from the late Republic onward took to be the normal or normative way in which social values were established and distilled, deeds were done and evaluated accordingly, and social reproduction occurred."³⁵

For our purposes, it is important to understand that Roller's schema is meant to speak to a foundational assumption of Roman literary production. Indeed, we need not posit in Sulpicius' Martinian corpus some sort of conscious appropriation of exemplary forms or functions (though such is present on some levels); rather, we simply demonstrate the authorial expectation—prevalent in Sulpicius as throughout antiquity—that readers are complicit in the production of textual meaning; that to read of the past is to reproduce its ethical contours in the present; essentially, that reading implies imitation.

³³ The metaphor of the whetstone is borrowed from Inwood, 295-6.

³⁴ Roller, "Exemplarity," 4-5 contains a description of the schema proper; 1-9 treats of exemplary discourse more broadly.

³⁵ *ibid.*, 6.

Roller is careful to note that this discourse most often manifests in an assemblage of distinct cultural phenomena, both literary and pictorial; that no single text or other cultural artifact “puts the four elements [discussed above] together to construct a discursive loop”. I would posit, however, that Sulpicius in his *Gallus* comes rather close, a possibility afforded both by the form of the work—namely, the fact of its being a dialogue—and its content—a report on the virtues of the desert monks and of Martin. Indeed, I think we can trace in a series of exemplary episodes the explicit linking of action, audience, commemoration and imitation. We will see that—in addition to the more common intertextual allusions which Roller traces in his article—Sulpicius has written a text in which various *exempla* interact explicitly with others to follow. In his dialogue, Sulpicius links such exemplary action with its multiple audiences; constructs commemorative monuments (to adopt Roller’s terminology) both within the narrative and by means of the narrative itself; and finally demonstrates the necessity of imitation, by both an internal and an external audience.

In the first half of this chapter, I show how the *Gallus* participates in this markedly classical (or perhaps better, traditionally Roman) rhetoric of exemplarity, with Sulpicius writing *exempla* into a series of passages linked by mimetic impulses—both literary and ethical—which serve to render the past as effectively coeval (if not quite contemporaneous) with the present. In the *Gallus*, these *exempla* are more than just imaginative allusions, more than trifling ornament or compelling persuasion. They are a commentary on the relationship of present virtue to past, on the ability (or inability) of contemporary actors to render the great deeds of the past in the present. Moreover, their explicitly discursive implementation foregrounds the role of literature in the performance of virtue: in the *Gallus*, the holy man serves as an explicit *exemplum* for his biographer’s literary compositions.

In the second half of this chapter, I turn in particular to Sulpicius' portrayal of Martin in the *Gallus*, a figure whose words and deeds often seem to conform to the expectations of traditional exemplary discourse, but likewise a figure who is so exceptional as to render that discourse invalid. Indeed, the somewhat ambiguous role of Martin in this discourse suggests the very problems inherent to exemplarity. For, Martin is an exemplary figure in every sense of the term: he is a model, a particular (if ideal) instance of a broader type; at the same time, he is absolutely exceptional, inimitable and therefore an impossible guide for ethical action. What is more, this troubling binary is at the heart of so much Christian ascetic discourse in late antiquity, because Martin, inasmuch as he is exceptional and inimitable, is in fact another instance of that earlier impossible model, Christ.

***Oboedientia* in the desert and in Gaul: Sulpicius' Rhetoric of Exemplarity**

Postumianus recounts in his narrative two similar stories which demonstrate the same saintly virtue. The two passages (1.18-19 in Fontaine's critical edition) make an especially compelling pair of *exempla*, marked both by parallels between them and by a complex network of exemplarity which looks beyond them. They celebrate novice monks who demonstrate exceptional—and explicitly exemplary—obedience as a means of gaining admittance to an Egyptian monastery which Postumianus visited in his travels. The first account in this diptych relates a trial by fire, the second a trial by water. The reports are first prefaced by an injunction to imitation. Postumianus declares: “I will relate to you two particularly great miracles of incredible obedience, though I can remember many more. Indeed, when it comes to inspiring the emulation

of virtues, people will not benefit from many if they do not benefit from a few.”³⁶ This is how *exempla* work, of course: the one stands in for the many. Postumianus' report serves as a description of saintly obedience and is explicitly framed as a means of inspiring its auditors to the imitation of virtue. The two passages in fact form part of a larger set piece, with which Postumianus ends his narrative. Following these two parallel stories comes also another pair, two negative *exempla*—of vanity and of false righteousness—which stand in an obverse relationship to those initial accounts of obedience.³⁷ It is with this group of four that Postumianus ends his narrative, finally declaring: “It ought to be enough that you know these things about the virtues of the Lord, which he accomplishes in his servants either to inspire imitation or avoidance.”³⁸ That the series of stories which precede this statement are *exempla* in a technical sense should be clear enough from their discursive function, but they are also so labeled. Later in the dialogue, the character Gallus cites this specific passage, ascribing just that term to the stories recounted here.³⁹ The passages therefore are conspicuously marked as *exempla*, their importance signaled both by their placement within the narrative and by the series of associative links with which they construct an exemplary framework for reading them.

Postumianus makes clear that his are examples of *oboedientia*; more broadly, however, the account is meant to inspire *uirtutum aemulationem*.⁴⁰ Not only is such exemplary *uirtus* a

³⁶ *G* 1.18.1, “Duo uobis referam incredibilis oboedientiae admodum magna miracula, licet suppetant plura recolenti. Sed ad incitandam uirtutum aemulationem, cui pauca non sufficiunt multa non proderunt.”

³⁷ *G* 1.20-22.

³⁸ *G* 1.22.5, “Haec uos de uirtutibus Domini quas in seruis suis uel imitanda operatus est uel timenda, scire sufficiat.”

³⁹ *G* 1.26.3.

⁴⁰ See n. 32.

common ethical category in the discursive model which Roller has described, but it is likewise fundamental in the *Gallus* itself, being Sulpicius' essential marker of effective religious power among the ascetic subjects described therein.⁴¹

In the first of the passages (1.18), a novice monk walks into a fiery furnace, in a show of obedience to his abbot. Instead of being burnt by the billowing flames, the monk is miraculously protected by a cooling dew. The second narrative in this linked pair (1.19) is markedly similar account of a novice monk who comes to that very same abbot, head of a *monasterium magnae dispositionis*, in hopes of gaining admission. As in the previous story, the law of obedience is placed before him. He promises enduring patience. The abbot hands him a withered twig and orders him to water it until it blooms. For three years, he labors tirelessly at the seemingly impossible task. In that third year, the twig sprouts a blossom. Postumianus attests that he himself has seen the tree, has seen those green branches which sprung from the once withering twig.

I would suggest that these *exempla* function within a familiar Roman rhetoric on exemplarity and that we can profitably consider them in the terms of Roller's discursive schema described above. But, already this might seem a bit counterintuitive. How could these be any more different than the very public virtue displayed by Horatius Cocles in his single-handed defense of the *pons sublicius* against an onslaught of Etruscans? This is the primary example in Roller's argument, and indeed, he makes explicit the fact that in Roman exemplary discourse the heroic deed must be "consequential for the Roman community at large".⁴² How could these intimate and indeed very individual acts of obedience be of consequence for some larger (presumably

⁴¹ See n. 1.

⁴² Roller, "Exemplarity," 4.

monastic) community? While it is true that a demonstration of extreme obedience does not seem to resemble Cocles' heroic defense of the fledgling republic, nevertheless the text makes clear that obedience is absolutely essential for the proper functioning of a monastic community. Indeed, following this diptych of exemplary obedience, Postumianus offers two negative *exempla* which demonstrate the destructive character of two qualities which are clearly represented as the very opposite of *oboedientia*. The two cautionary tales are brought to bear on the local situation in one of those *intermèdes gaulois* discussed earlier, and the consequence of obedience (or more properly, its absence) for the Gallic community is made clear.⁴³

Now, despite the fact that we are reading the story (and someone must therefore have witnessed the deed), we encounter that assumption prevalent in no small number of Christian hagiographical literature, that a holy man hides his virtues, performs exemplary deeds out of the view of men. Consider Sulpicius' description of Martin in the introduction to his *Life*: "No one knows those deeds of which he alone was aware; for, not seeking the praise of men, he sought to hide—so far as he could—all his virtues."⁴⁴ Moreover, in the second book of the *Gallus*, it is said of Martin that "many of his former achievements were known to the world and could not be concealed, but said to be innumerable are those which—while he avoided boastfulness—he kept hidden and did not suffer to come to the notice of men. For, having surpassed human nature and with the knowledge of his virtue trampling underfoot worldly glory, he enjoyed heaven as his witness."⁴⁵ Indeed, earlier still in the *Gallus* we are witness to the potentially troubling nature of

⁴³ See above, Chapter III.

⁴⁴ *VM*, 1.7, "adeo ea, in quibus ipse tantum sibi conscius fuit, nesciuntur, quia laudem ab hominibus non requirens, quantum in ipso fuit, omnes uirtutes suas latere uoluisset."

⁴⁵ *G* 2.4.2, "Multa quidem illius prius gesta innotuere mundo neque potuere celari, sed innumerabilia esse dicuntur quae, dum iactantiam vitat, occuluit neque in hominum notitiam passus est pervenire, quippe qui,

miraculous deeds performed in view of others: two young boys, who tame an asp and are praised by their brethren, come to be scolded by their abbot on account of inflated pride.⁴⁶ So, in Postumianus' first example of obedience, the abbot is perhaps a natural sole witness to such virtue, and there is no explicit indication of the ethical judgement which he attaches to the action. We read simply that he did not regret giving his harsh orders.⁴⁷ The very same seems to be the case in the second account, the trial by water. In fact, there is no mention of a primary eyewitness, no emphasis on the spectacular nature of the deed itself.

This seems out of step with the schema of exemplarity which Roller has laid out: heroic deeds need be conspicuous and conspicuously consequential for the Roman community. I would however suggest that this departure is more instructive than troubling. For, at the very foundation of a Christian virtue like obedience is this sense of humility which is said to inform the actions of Martin and likewise these monks. In this account, as in much of the rest of the *Gallus*, the real audience of consequence is a secondary one, given the opportunity to evaluate the deed because of Postumianus' commemoration of it in narrative. Indeed, the fact of the text's genre, its being a dialogue, does guarantee a doubling of secondary audiences. These are the interlocutors, whose secondary witness functions at the diegetic level of narrative, and the potential community of readers, often referenced explicitly in the text,⁴⁸ which should be seen to participate at an

humanum substantiam supergressus, uirtutis suae conscientia mundi gloriam calcans, caelo teste frueretur."

⁴⁶ *G* 1.9.

⁴⁷ *G* 1.18.6, "nec abbatem pigeret dura mandasse."

⁴⁸ Audiences proliferate in the text. In the third book of the dialogue a whole *turba monachorum* listens to the discussion, *G* 3.1.4. Elsewhere, the interlocutors enumerate all the far reaches of the world that discourse on Martin has reached (*G* 1.26.1-2) and that this new dialogue will eventually reach (*G* 3.17.4-7).

extradiegetic level. Postumianus speaks of this deed to his interlocutors (Gallus and Sulpicius, as characters in the narrative); likewise, through Postumianus, Sulpicius (as the presumed narrator) writes this deed for his readers. The auditors and readers alike are asked to evaluate the ethical content of these monks' deeds, to proclaim them perfect, happy, glorious.⁴⁹ It is they who (to use Roller's formulation) "constitute the action as consequential for the community, and thereby transform it into a socially and ethically significant "deed"."⁵⁰

The most essential monument to the exemplary actions recounted herein is therefore the *Gallus* itself, which will—so Sulpicius proclaims—make its way in the hands of Postumianus to Rome and Illyria, then to Africa and its Carthage, Achaia and its Corinth and Athens, even all the way to Egypt.⁵¹ These exemplary actions and all the rest recounted by Postumianus about the Egyptian monks and Gallus about Martin will be memorialized throughout the very breadth of the Roman world. Unlike, for example, the virtuous deed of Mucius Scaevola—which Livy relates in book two of his *History*—there is no scarred hand, no new cognomen which stands in for the act and which repeatedly makes it visible by constructing multiple secondary audiences. There is no statue like that built for Horatius Cocles. At the diegetic level, a monument is constructed through Postumianus' telling, a monument which is presumed to proliferate extradiegetically as a result of the account's being fixed in text.

In the second account, however, we do see a certain restrained sense of monumentality. Postumianus explains: "I myself have seen the sapling grown from that twig, which, standing with green branches in the courtyard of the monastery, displays like a witness what reward

⁴⁹ *G* 1.18.6, "Qui eo quo aduenerat die, dum temptaretur infirmus, perfectus inuentus est. Merito felix, merito gloriosus, probatus oboedientia glorificatus est passione."

⁵⁰ Roller, "Exemplarity," 5.

⁵¹ *G* 3.17.4-7.

obedience merits and what power faith has.”⁵² This tree is quite clearly a monument, and of the very sort which Roller describes. However, in keeping with the assumption of humility described above, it is an inward looking monument, a form of commemoration which is visible only to a carefully proscribed community. This is not a statue in the *comitium*, like that erected for Horatius Cocles. Rather, it is in an enclosed space, prominent certainly but only for those allowed entrance into the monastery. It is coherent with the kind of community that can benefit from the *exemplum*: this *exemplum* is intended not for the entire Roman world, nor even it seems all Christians, but rather the monastery and its inhabitants.

We have already touched on the explicit injunction to imitation which prefaces the two accounts. The auditors and readers, for whom this deed has been commemorated, are in turn asked to replicate it. These two *exempla* are figured to be sufficient for rousing the reader to imitation of the virtues.⁵³ But what makes this exemplary diptych so fascinating is that it speaks so clearly to the iterative nature of Roman exemplary discourse. One example begets another, and these novice monks—the first tested in fire, the second tested in water—are but one in a line of models, whose deeds generate yet more deeds, in what Roller terms “an endless loop of social reproduction.”⁵⁴ These are simple stories which evoke the contours of an idealized Egyptian monasticism, and we can immediately recognize the extent to which they interact with earlier texts.

Postumianus himself compares the first monk to the three Hebrews cast into a fire by Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 3:19-30), potentially troubling *exempla* in that they are quite explicitly

⁵² *G* 1.19.5, “Ego ipsam ex illa uirgula arbusculam uidi, quae hodieque, in atrio monasterii ramis uirentibus quasi in testimonium manens, quantum oboedientia meruerit et quantum fides possit ostendit.”

⁵³ *G* 1.18.1, “Sed ad incitandum uirtutum aemulationem, cui pauca non sufficiunt multa non proderunt.”

⁵⁴ Roller, “Exemplarity,” 6.

models of disobedience in the service of faith.⁵⁵ Their disobedience, however, is directed at a secular authority. Nebuchadnezzar demands they worship a golden idol; when they refuse, he orders them thrown into a blazing furnace. As they look on, the king and his advisers notice in the flames not three men, but four and all seemingly unharmed. The appearance (*species*) of the fourth is *similis filio Dei*.⁵⁶ The men are ordered out of the flames and emerge completely unscathed. All are amazed, and Nebuchadnezzar allows open worship of the Hebrew god. The novice monk in Postumianus' story is represented as an exemplary iteration of this long ago act, saved as he is from the flames by an *audax fides*.⁵⁷ His present action is given meaning by an exemplary past, just as it will look forward to new instantiations among the audience which commemorates it. Indeed, exemplary discourse demands that his deed neither be the first in a series of acts, nor the last.⁵⁸ The obedient monk's virtue—framed as it is by Postumianus—collapses the distance between the past and the present, marking the contemporary world of desert asceticism as coterminous with that of biblical heroes.

Lastly, the young monk in Postumianus' account both refers back and looks forward to the miraculous deeds of Martin himself. Later in the dialogue, the interlocutor Gallus will mention the time when, "set in the midst of flames, Martin felt not the fire."⁵⁹ This later mention is in fact a sort of *praeteritio*, pointing to an earlier account written by Sulpicius in a letter to

⁵⁵ *G* 1.18.4, "Nec distulit parere praecepto: medias flammas nihil cunctatus ingreditur, quae mox tam audaci fide uictae uelut illis quondam Hebraeis pueris cessere uenienti."

⁵⁶ *Dn* 3:25 (92).

⁵⁷ *G* 1.18.4. The Hebrews are likewise delivered because they trusted in their God: *Dn* 3:28 (95), "et erumpens Nabuchodnosor ait benedictus Deus eorum Sedra uidelicet Misac et Abdenago qui misit angelum suum et eruit seruos suos quia crediderunt in eo."

⁵⁸ cf. Roller, "Exemplarity," 23.

⁵⁹ *G* 2.9.5, "Hoc illud fuit tempus quo inter medias flammas positus non sensit incendium."

Eusebius. This letter is extant and describes a time when Martin, staying the night in a church, is caught in the midst of a fire. Initially gripped by fear, Martin quickly remembers himself and begins to pray: the flames encircle but never touch him.⁶⁰

The second account also evinces a confluence of parallel narratives. Commenting on this passage, Fontaine remarks: “le rameau qui fleurit est, pour son porteur, un signe d’élection divine.”⁶¹ He suggests that the passage recalls the flowering of Aaron’s staff in *Numbers* 17 and likewise the story of Joseph’s rod in the *Protevangelium of James* (which is itself a repetition of the story in *Numbers*).⁶² Still closer parallels lie in other collections which describe the beginnings of monasticism in Egypt. In the *Apophthegmata Patrum*, a similar story is told about John the Dwarf: “It was said of Abba John the Dwarf the he withdrew and lived in the desert at Scetis with an old man of Thebes. His abba, taking a piece of dry wood, planted it and said to him, ‘Water it every day with a bottle of water, until it bears fruit.’ Now the water was so far away that he had to leave in the evening and return the following morning. At the end of three years the wood came to life and bore fruit. Then the old man took some of the fruit and carried it to the church saying to the brethren, ‘Take and eat the fruit of obedience.’”⁶³ In fact, the parallel is so exact that we might assume these to be two versions of the same story. The account of the novice monk in the *Gallus* might well depend on the same oral tradition which is later recorded in the *AP*. It could also be a conscious repetition, an exemplary retelling which plays on the

⁶⁰ *ep.* 1. That too is a text dense with exemplary meaning. There, Martin is written as a new Paul, consumed not by water but by flames, and thereafter emerging intact. See discussion above, Chapter II.

⁶¹ Fontaine, *Gallus*, 178 n.1

⁶² *ibid.*, 178.

⁶³ *PG* 65 204c. The translation is from Benedicta Ward, *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1975), 85.

western Latin appetite for recognizable stories about Egyptian monks. Cassian's *Institutes* likewise recounts much the same story of a certain John of Lycopolis: this is a story whose content is being repeated widely in the literature about Egyptian monasticism.⁶⁴

But, for all the earlier models on which these *exempla* themselves draw (and they are abundant), what makes the diptych on obedience so compelling in a discussion of exemplary discourse is that it is in fact part of a discursive loop internal to the *Gallus* itself, in which one character enacts at the outermost level of narrative an imitation of these hypodiegetic *exempla*. The dialogue quite explicitly conforms to the expectations of an exemplary discourse such as Roller describes, but then takes one additional step. Here, we begin to see the “cyclical dimensions” of exemplarity, as the actors in the dialogue themselves seek out models recounted earlier in the text. We will now see how these two *exempla*, which depict the extreme obedience of novice monks, form a productive parallel with a later, crucial moment in the dialogue.

Gallus' *oboedientia*: Saintly virtue and literary performance

In the previous chapter, we saw that the character Gallus serves as a model throughout the text. He is for the audience an exemplary reader of *exempla*. The dialogue form allows Sulpicius to dramatize the hagiographer's audience engaged in the very act of reading (or hearing, as the case may be) about Martin and other holy men: that is to say, Sulpicius is able to model for his external readers a programme of exemplary reading. He moves beyond simple exhortation. We

⁶⁴ Cass. *Inst.* 4.24. The exact literary-historical relation between the accounts is impossible to discern, primarily because of the difficulties associated with dating the *Apophthegmata Patrum*. This is a collection of sayings recorded probably in the fifth century (that is, after Sulpicius writes the *Gallus*) but of course referring to events and figures from earlier in the fourth century. Another passage in the *Gallus* shows a similar sort of repetition (1.12), repeated in Cassian, *Inst.* 5.27.1

readers are instead able to witness this interpretive practice as performed by an internal audience in the narrative world of the text. It is fitting in a dialogue like the *Gallus*, where the naratee is so dramatically foregrounded, that Sulpicius' programme of exemplary reading is also most clearly represented. That is to say, the form of the work serves to buttress its interpretive context. In a text deeply concerned with the practice of reading, we see a character patterning for the external audience the ideal interpretive approach to narratives of Martin and other holy men.

Now we might reinforce our understanding of this process by an appeal to the dense rhetoric of exemplarity which sustains the text, returning once more to that critical—even programmatic—passage in the dialogue where the mostly taciturn Gallus is about to begin speaking in earnest. This moment comes just as the interlocutors address the virtues of Martin for the first time. The character Postumianus, having now at some great length told of his travels among the monks of the eastern deserts and of the wonders he saw there, readily yields to Sulpicius' assertion that Martin nevertheless surpasses them all. They both agree that Martin embodies in himself each and every of those virtues attributed to the individual eastern monks. Martin imitates; by that imitation, however, he exceeds.⁶⁵

Postumianus then asks Sulpicius for further examples of Martin's holy deeds. Sulpicius demurs: "I think this would more rightly be asked of Gallus, since he knows more—what disciple can be ignorant of his master's deeds?—and since he no doubt owes this recompense not only to Martin, but also to us. For, I have already published that book, and you have hitherto commemorated the deeds of eastern monks."⁶⁶ It is in Gallus' response to this request that we

⁶⁵ *G* 1.25-26.

⁶⁶ *G* 1.26.7-8, "arbitror rectius istud a Gallo esse poscendum, quipped qui plura nouerit neque enim ignorare potuit magistri facta discipulus et qui non inmerito istam uicem non solum Martino, sed etiam nobis debeat, qui ego iam librum edidi, tu hactenus orientalium gesta memorasti."

begin to see the implications of a fully realized rhetoric of exemplarity. In the narrative world of this dialogue, *exempla* compel subsequent action. What is more, by depicting a process in which exemplary reading so motivates the deeds of its characters, the text is itself able to serve as an example of how to read *exempla*.

Gallus' initial reaction is to declare himself unequal to the task.⁶⁷ He cannot live up to the authorial example set by Sulpicius and by Postumianus. It is only by appeal to a different series of *exempla* that Gallus can overcome this ostensible lack of fitness. "I am compelled by the examples of obedience related above by Postumianus not to refuse that duty which you impose."⁶⁸ Gallus' deed is therefore figured as a reproduction of the obedience of the eastern monks, an immediate manifestation of that virtue rendered in the deserts of Egypt and represented in the words of Postumianus. Just as those monks obeyed their abbot, so too will Gallus obey Sulpicius. Just as they produced miraculous *uirtus*, so too will Gallus, though his will consist in literary composition. Indeed, this discursive loop serves to equate the writing of hagiography (and the rhetorical production of saintly—here, specifically Martinian—virtues) with the miraculous products of extreme obedience. Neither the overcoming of fire nor the unexpected flowering of a long-watered twig is more a manifestation of virtue than the recounting of Martin's miracles. And of course, an account of Martin is exactly that: to tell of him is to manifest in words the most spectacular of deeds.

Gallus therefore is represented as a model reader of *exempla*: his reading engenders imitation. But, as we might expect from so exemplary a reader, Gallus constructs not a simple feedback loop, in which one instance of obedience begets another, the two reinforcing each other

⁶⁷ *G* 1.27.1, "Ego plane, inquit Gallus, licet inpar sim tanto oneri."

⁶⁸ *G* 1.27.1, "tamen relatis superius a Postumianus oboedientiae cogor exemplis ut munus istud quod inponitis non recusem."

in turn. Rather, he introduces another *exemplum* which renders the loop doubly recursive. Gallus, still claiming an anxiety over so onerous a task, enlists Martin himself as an exemplar: “If you have conceded to me that I was a disciple of Martin, grant me this also, that I be allowed under the shelter of his example to despise the vain trappings of speech and ornaments of words.”⁶⁹ Gallus’ discursive loop becomes like a self-amplifying chain of reactions, each new example serving as a catalyst for subsequent imitation. By appealing to Martin as an *exemplum* for his literary composition, Gallus makes his hagiography doubly mimetic. It will reproduce the content of Martin’s life according to the manner in which it was lived. Even more telling, the form and the content are in complete concord: Gallus’ account of Martin, told in a humble style, will begin by telling acts of miraculous humility.

Gallus is not the only interlocutor who situates literary production in a complex of exemplary models. Postumianus responds to Gallus’ anxiety over ornamented speech: “Speak Celtic or even Gallic for all I care, so long as you speak of Martin. But really, I believe that, though you be mute, words would not escape you, by which you might eloquently speak of Martin, just as the tongue of Zachariah was loosed at the naming of John.”⁷⁰ Here then is a potent exemplary precursor for the composition of Martinian hagiography, one which merits some unpacking. The gospel of Luke begins with the angel Gabriel prophesying to Zachariah that there will be born to him a son, whom he will name John. Zachariah, with an aged wife and very old himself, is incredulous. As a punishment for his lack of faith, Zachariah is rendered mute.⁷¹ His

⁶⁹ *G* 1.27.3, “Nam si mihi tribuistis Martini me esse discipulum, illud etiam concedite, ut mihi liceat exemplo illius inanes sermonum faleras et uerborum ornamenta contemnere.”

⁷⁰ 1.27.4, “Tu uero, inquit Postumianus, uel celtice aut si mauis gallice loquere, dummodo Martinum loquaris! Ego autem credo quia, etiamsi mutus esses, non defutura tibi uerba essent quibus Martinum facundo ore loquereris, sicut Zachariae in Iohannis nomine lingua resoluta est.”

⁷¹ Lk 1:22, “permansit mutus”. Cf. *G* 1.27.4, “etiamsi mutus esses”.

wife Elizabeth does of course conceive and give birth to a son.⁷² Still unable to speak and at last heeding the words of Gabriel, Zachariah agrees to name his son John. “Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue set free, and he began to speak, praising God.”⁷³ It is by an act of obedience that Zachariah is made eloquent. The child, originally to be named for his father,⁷⁴ is given the name John, according to the instructions of Gabriel’s prophecy. Gallus’ obedience is therefore prefigured in that of Zachariah. And just as Zachariah by that act is rendered capable of speech, so too will Gallus speak primarily on account of that virtue.

More compelling still is the end to which Zachariah directs his newly regained eloquence. Filled with the Holy Spirit, he sings the praises of his son John, called the Baptist, and foretells his role in preparing the way for Christ.⁷⁵ Gallus, we recognize, is very much like Zachariah in this respect too. For, the eloquence he gains by his exemplary obedience is directed at telling the virtues of Martin, who in this exemplary framework is therefore likened to John the Baptist. Just as John prepares the way for Christ and the possibility of salvation, so too is Martin regularly represented in Sulpicius’ writings as an intercessor or otherwise salvific figure.⁷⁶ Here then is an exemplary allusion which looks forward also to our next section (on Martin’s place in this rhetoric); for, it inscribes Martin as an analogue to or even repetition of John the Baptist, a figure regularly cited as scriptural justification for the ascetic life and likewise a figure who is the most

⁷² Lk 1:57-66.

⁷³ Lk 1:64, “apertum est autem ilico os eius et lingua eius et loquebatur benedicens Deum”

⁷⁴ Lk 1:59.

⁷⁵ Lk 1:67, “et Zaccharias pater eius impletus est Spiritu Sancto et prophetavit dicens”

⁷⁶ Cf. *VM* 1.6; *ep.* 2.16; *ep.* 3.21. See above, Chapter II.

immediate and most obvious type for Christ, inasmuch as he explicitly announces (and even facilitates) his coming.

In the present discussion, however, most relevant is the persistent linking of Gallus' hagiographical composition to a complex system of *exempla*. His words are figured as an exemplary manifestation of virtuous deeds, a contemporary reformulation of multiple saintly sources: the miraculous obedience of the desert monks, the humble manner of Martin's life, the obedience of Zachariah and the holy eloquence it enabled. Writing about Martin comes to be represented as a sort of ascetic practice, diversely inscribed by an iterative series of holy models.

Vere Christi iste discipulus: Martin in Sulpicius' Rhetoric of Exemplarity

Sulpicius writes Martin as a participant to the exemplary discourse so prevalent in the *Gallus*: the *virtus* of the holy man is regularly depicted as a manifestation in the present of some heroic or holy deed in the past. Figured at times explicitly and at times obliquely as an imitator of Christ, as like to Christ, or an other Christ, Martin accomplishes virtues and performs miracles which Sulpicius frames as a contemporary iteration of Christ's own deeds. The holy Martin by his virtue brings the past -- so full of miracles -- forward into the present, feeding the hungry, healing the sick, resurrecting the dead. In this exemplary schema, Martin is a disciple of Christ and an imitator of the miracles which he accomplished.⁷⁷

In fact, the saint is more than a modern instance of Christ; rather, Christ explicitly works in him.⁷⁸ That is to say, Martin does not just make present the holy deeds of the past. In his

⁷⁷ *G* 3.10.5, "uirtutum ... aemulator."

⁷⁸ *G* 3.10.5, "Christum in se ... operantem."

person, he makes present the very workings of Christ himself. This is an essential notion in Sulpicius' exemplary framework, a basic rubric which governs also the heroic deeds related by Postumianus of the monks in the eastern deserts. Indeed, Postumianus is asked at the very outset of the dialogue to describe "with what signs and miracles Christ works in his servants".⁷⁹ Then, as he concludes his narrative—with an explicit appraisal of the monks' place in a rhetoric of exemplarity—he again characterizes the works of the desert ascetics as the manifestation of Christ's own work: "Let it be enough for you to learn these things about the virtues of the Lord, which he has worked in his servants, either for the purpose of imitation or avoidance".⁸⁰ The exemplary discourse which so fills the *Gallus* takes as its basis the working of Christ in the miracles of the present.

What is more, the comparison of Martin to Christ can be especially fruitful in the context of exemplary discourse, because a typological understanding of biblical texts marks Christ as both the logical *telos* in a series of exemplary holy men and the source of their exemplary virtue. He is the beginning and end of an exemplary loop. As the Word, Christ stands outside history as the original author of virtue, the first exemplar. Incarnate, Christ lived in history as the culmination of those biblical types—patriarchs, prophets and kings—who prefigured his coming. Martin functions as a sort of epilogue, which tracks that story into the present day. Thus we read early in Gallus' narrative the text setting Martin in an exemplary schema which by a series of oblique references links the bishop with Solomon—a prominent type for Christ⁸¹—and then too with Christ.

⁷⁹ *G* 1.2.2, "in seruis suis operetur."

⁸⁰ *G* 1.22.5.

⁸¹ cf. especially Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 127.

Martin, having been summoned by the emperor himself, has arrived at the court of Maximus and is received there with honor. The two men discourse on "past things and future, on the glory of the faithful and the immortality of the saints",⁸² but Gallus here attends not to Martin's dealings with the emperor. Rather, he tells especially of the services the bishop receives from Maximus' queen: she hangs on his every word, washing his feet with tears and wiping them with her hair. The empress is "not inferior to that example from the Gospel".⁸³ Here explicitly likened to the *peccatrix* at Lk 7:38, it is the queen whose role in the exemplary schema is underscored. Martin is like to Christ in this arrangement, but the comparison is left implicit. For, the text details at length neither Martin's holy words nor his miraculous deeds, but rather the queen's assiduous attentions to the saint. She arranges his seat, sets his table, brings him water for washing, and serves him food she herself cooked. Mindless of imperial pomp, she acts as a servant, modest and humble. She mixes the saint a drink. She collects the crumbs of his bread, preferring them to imperial banquets.⁸⁴ For this, the empress is described a blessed woman.⁸⁵ She merits, Gallus suggests, comparison to the Queen of Sheba, who travelled from the ends of the earth to hear Solomon.⁸⁶

The comparison again only implicit, Martin is by analogy likened to Solomon, himself a regular type for Christ.⁸⁷ The text acknowledges (and refines) this typology in the section's final

⁸² G 2.6.3, "totus illi cum eo sermo de praesentibus, de futuris, de fidelium gloria, de aeternitate sanctorum."

⁸³ G 2.6.3, "euangelico illo non inferior exemplo, pedes sancti fletu rigabat, crine tergebat."

⁸⁴ G 2.6.4-6.

⁸⁵ G 2.6.6, "beata mulier."

⁸⁶ G 2.6.6.

⁸⁷ See n. 6 above.

sentence, performing a clever reversal of the story of Christ in the home of the sisters Mary and Martha: "the faith of the two queens should be compared: the one sought to hear a wise man; the other, content not only to hear, was worthy to serve him".⁸⁸ Then, in the next section, after an interruption by Postumianus, the narrator makes explicit the queen's likeness to the two sisters. "In the case of Martin, the queen performed each role: she both served like Martha and listened like Mary".⁸⁹ This final reference confirms the exemplary schema for the reader, situating the empress in a series of *exempla* which comprises the Queen of Sheba and the sisters Mary and Martha (as well as the *peccatrix* in Luke). Of course, the analogue to that exemplary series is the one which links Solomon to Christ to Martin. I would stress that even here the comparison remains ever implicit, the queen being the essential *comparanda*.

At the same time, the text seems to acknowledge that, just as Martin follows these *exempla*, so he will set an example by his actions. This is natural enough for a rhetoric in which one example necessarily begets another. However, the suitability of Martin as an *exemplum* is immediately questioned, first by Postumianus because it seems perhaps to set a bad example: "I worry that those who freely mingle with women might somehow defend themselves by this example".⁹⁰ Gallus' rebuttal of Postumianus' concern seems also to question the suitability of this *exemplum*, because when one attends to the particulars of the situation, the bishop can be seen to have set an impossible example: "If anyone wants to use this example, let him keep to it in every respect. Let the cause be the same, the person the same, the service the same, and the banquet the

⁸⁸ G 2.6.7. On this transposition of "hearing" and "serving", cf. also Fontaine, *Gallus*, 249 n. 5, who notes that "la valeur des deux expressions de la foi est inversée, puisque "servir" est ici donné pour préférable à écouter."

⁸⁹ G 2.7.5, "Sed in Martino ista regina utrumque compleuit: et ministravit ut Martha, et audiuit ut Maria."

⁹⁰ G 2.7.2, "uereor ne isto aliquantulum se tueantur exemplo qui libenter feminis inseruntur."

same, and let it happen only once in one's life."⁹¹ This of course plays up a theme prevalent throughout Gallus' narrative. Among the Gallic clergy, even (or perhaps especially) the most Christ-like of actions will come in for censure or be greeted by disbelief.

Of course, in Gallus' telling, Martin's dealings with said clergy demand also a Christ-like patience. Another instance, then, of an oblique comparison between Martin and Christ comes when Martin suffers the myriad abuses and bitter anger of the monk Brictio, his disciple and eventual successor in the see of Tours. Martin who heard the insults of Brictio "with placid countenance and tranquil mind" had but one response:⁹² "If Christ suffered Judas, why should I not suffer Brictio?"⁹³ Elsewhere too, Martin's actions are figured by those of Christ, as when a hemorrhaging woman is cured just by touching the saint's cloak (and described in terms identical to those found in Mark);⁹⁴ or when Martin revives a child at Chartres (again in terms which evoke the gospel narratives, here the resurrection at Nain).⁹⁵

Nor is Christ Martin's only model. Sulpicius also writes Martin as like to the desert monks whose virtues Postumianus narrates in the first part of the dialogue. Martin's deeds echo theirs, as Sulpicius (in his own voice as interlocutor) makes explicit. He notes that like the Egyptian monk, Martin too has conquered fire; like the anchorites, Martin has mastered beasts; and, to him who exorcised unclean spirits, Martin has shown many times that he is not inferior.⁹⁶

⁹¹ *G* 2.7.6, "Quod si quis hoc uti uoluerit exemplo, per omnia teneat: talis causa sit talisque persona, tale obsequium, tale conuiuium, et in omni uita semel tantum."

⁹² *G* 3.15.3, "uultu placido, mente tranquilla."

⁹³ *G* 3.15.7, "Si Christus Iudam passus est, cur ego non patiar Brictionem?"

⁹⁴ *G* 3.9 and Mk 5:25-29.

⁹⁵ *G* 2.4 and Lk 7:12-17.

⁹⁶ *G* 1.25.1-2.

Indeed, in these cases, Martin's imitation invariably exceeds the original: "all those things which different individuals had done separately, were easily and entirely accomplished by that one man alone".⁹⁷ The text characterizes Martin's singular *virtus* as equivalent to the collective powers of all the monks of Egypt. Martin here performs an excessive sort of imitation, one which exceeds its models (unless of course those models are themselves divine). He can match others, but none can quite match him.

It is in fact this excessive imitation of the desert monks which begins to gesture at what is so strikingly Christ-like about Martin. We have already seen that Sulpicius writes Martin—like so many saints and martyrs—as like to Christ, characterizing the holy man's deeds as contemporary instances of Christ's virtue. But, the essential likeness consists in Martin's resistance to subsequent imitation, his apparent inimitability. Sulpicius' Martin participates in this extensive rhetoric of exemplarity, in which his *virtus* must necessarily have a model, but the very content of that imitation is inimitability. Martin imitates Christ, inasmuch as he cannot be imitated.

Indeed, I have suggested that Martin is an essential part of the exemplary discourse which Sulpicius constructs in the *Gallus*. This remains true. But, Martin likewise pushes the boundaries of this discursive mode. In some instances, he even breaks down its essential parameters, doing so in two fundamental ways. The first we have already mentioned: Martin is to some extent inimitable; that is to say, he is Christ-like in his tendency to resist imitators. The second is in some ways a logical extension of the first. In exemplary discourse as we have thus far described it, a model necessitates subsequent imitation, is valuable to the extent that it engenders repetition. Martin, if inimitable, is a somewhat problematic model. None can imitate him, save for Martin

⁹⁷ G 1.24.1, "omnia illa quae singuli diuersa fecissent per unum istum facile completa."

himself. The result—at least in parts of the dialogue—is a self-reflexive and intratextual mode of exemplary discourse. Martin becomes a model for himself. His mimetic impulses become essentially recursive and self-directed.

Humanam substantiam supergressus: Sainly Inimitability and Exemplary Discourse

In the *Gallus*, Sulpicius writes Martin's deeds into an exemplary framework which posits that heroic or holy actions are neither wholly original—they necessarily assume some prior model—nor perfectly final—they inevitably engender further imitation. That is to say, such *exempla* by their very nature structure a series of repetitions from the past through the present and (one expects) into the future. Indeed, already in the *Life*, before Sulpicius begins his narrative proper, before we have read any of Martin's impressive feats, we read that the saint should be held a model: "I think I will accomplish something well worth the necessary pains, if I write the life of a most holy man, which shall serve in the future as an example to others; by which, indeed, the readers shall be roused to the pursuit of true knowledge, and heavenly warfare and divine virtue."⁹⁸ Martin's *Life* is figured as an *exemplum* for its readers; what is more, the text's very potential for exemplarity provides Sulpicius his primary grounds for writing hagiography.

Reading assumes imitation.

However, the flaw which inheres to such an assumption becomes ever more obvious as the reader advances through the Martinian corpus, encountering miracle after miracle: Martin sets an impossible standard. None could venture to imitate so holy a man. The interlocutor

⁹⁸ *VM* 1.6, "Vnde facturus mihi operae pretium videor si vitam sanctissimi viri exemplo aliis mox futuram perscripsero quo utique ad veram sapientiam et caelestem militiam divinam que virtutem legentes incitabuntur."

Gallus, having barely begun his account in the dialogue, concedes as much. “We were dumbfounded by so great a miracle and admitted what the truth demanded: none under heaven could imitate Martin.”⁹⁹ This exclamation responds to a pair of miraculous healings. The first Martin effects at a distance, with Gallus’ uncle Evanthius healed just at the approach of the holy man; the second Martin accomplishes despite his patient being nearly dead from the venom of a snake. And indeed, this second healing repeats earlier resurrection scenes, with *surrexit* echoing both Sulpicius’ *Life* and the Matthean gospel.¹⁰⁰ Sulpicius’ language makes explicit that those who witness these deeds—and, by extension, the interlocutors who hear of them in Gallus’ narrative—evaluate Martin within the context of exemplary discourse. They judge Martin’s potential as an *exemplum*, even if only to concede that he ultimately confounds the possibility of imitation. Moreover, Gallus’ account serves as a commemorative monument to Martin’s exemplary action; the re-telling more securely situates the miracle within a rhetoric of exemplarity. The unlikely prospect of subsequent imitation, however, seems to subvert the discursive loop we have come to expect when reading in an exemplary mode. The potential for imitation—and therefore its potency—is here limited by Martin’s almost inhuman *uirtus*. Indeed, Gallus’ account of the healings and his subsequent exclamation signal to the reader early in this narrative of Martin’s deeds that the contours of exemplary discourse map onto Martin rather differently than they do the desert monks.

That is not to say that Martin’s *uirtus* exists wholly outside the parameters of exemplary discourse as construed in the *Gallus*. Already we have seen that those who witness the deed—

⁹⁹ *G* 2.2.7, Nos, obstupefacti tantae rei miraculo, id quod ipsa cogebat ueritas fatebamur, non esse sub caelo qui Martinum possit imitari.

¹⁰⁰ *G* 2.2.7, Puer surrexit incolumis. The verb repeats the vocabulary of resurrection found at *VM* 16.8 and at Mt 9:7. Cf. Fontaine, 225n.12 and see also below, pp. nn-nn.

whether directly in its doing or indirectly in its telling—are conditioned to evaluate Martin’s potential for imitation. Gallus’ initial reaction to the saint’s miraculous healings—sheer astonishment excepted—is to consider the viability of Martin’s deed as a model in the text’s exemplary schema. This happens elsewhere in the dialogue, and with a rather similar judgment: Martin is all too often an inappropriate *exemplum*. Gallus’ description of the empress’ attentions to Martin provokes two divergent evaluations, as we have already seen. Postumianus worries that Martin might set a bad example; Gallus contends in response that Martin in fact sets an impossible example.¹⁰¹ Here the evaluation does not preclude absolutely the possibility of taking Martin’s interactions with the queen as a model for future action; rather, Gallus makes the implicit judgment that none could hold himself to so high a standard.¹⁰² Indeed, Martin is represented here in the *Gallus* (and elsewhere in Sulpicius’ writings) as having somehow surpassed mere human capabilities: “Martin transcended the nature of man.”¹⁰³

This sense of inimitability extends also to literary representation. Martin’s deeds can no more be rendered in pen and ink than in the actions of men. “About Martin you ought not expect that there be any limit to his telling: he spreads further than can be encompassed in any speech.”¹⁰⁴ This echoes an earlier claim made by Sulpicius in the *Life*: in no way could he get at everything Martin did, and he was not about to try.¹⁰⁵ To the extent that Martin is inimitable,

¹⁰¹ *G* 2.7.2-5. See also the discussion above, pp. nn-nn.

¹⁰² *G* 2.7.6.

¹⁰³ *G* 2.4.2, “humanam substantiam supergressus”. Cf. also, *VM* 2.7, “ultra humanum modum” and 27.1 “extra naturam hominis”.

¹⁰⁴ *G* 3.17.1, “De Martino autem expectare non debes ut ulla sit meta referenti: latius ille diffunditur quam ut ullo ualeat sermone concludi.”

¹⁰⁵ *VM* 1.7, “nequaquam ad omnia illius potuerim peruenire.”

then, so too is he unrepresentable (or so Sulpicius claims, even as he renders the saint's deeds in this series of texts). Martin, in Sulpicius' estimation, seems to be a figure who collapses the parameters of exemplary discourse, inasmuch as his deeds resist *mimesis*, in both its primary senses. Any mimetic impulse, whether attempted in word or in deed, cannot but fail to reproduce the scope of Martin's virtue. Martin imitates and is imitated, but it tends to be a reflexive sort of imitation: the only man consistently capable of imitating Martin is Martin himself, and even that imitation fails to be a perfect reproduction. Before becoming a bishop, Martin resurrected from the dead two people, but only (!) one thereafter.¹⁰⁶

Martin Imitating Martin: Self-Reflexive Imitation and Exemplary Discourse

The very first story which Gallus recounts about Martin is in many ways an analogue to or even a facsimile of a particularly famous event from Sulpicius' *Life*. Here in the dialogue, a poor man, half-naked, begs Martin for some clothing. The bishop orders a deacon to obtain clothing for the beggar, then retreats to his chamber before giving the mass. Gallus, speaking as narrator, makes then a brief digression, as to describe the apartment in which Martin rests, one aspect of it in particular. He details the exact nature of the chair on which Martin sits. It is not a grand throne—like that used by some other (unnamed, presumably Gallic) bishop—but rather a rude, little stool. It serves as a symbol of Martin's humility, humility which is set in direct opposition to the overwrought vanity and false righteousness of that other bishop. The stool, which Gallus calls a *tripeccias*, is also an opportunity for self-conscious reflection on the claims to rhetorical humility

¹⁰⁶ G 2.4.3, "Quod uerum esse, uel ex his quae conperta nobis sunt nec latere potuerunt, possumus aestimare, siquidem ante episcopatum duos mortuos uitae restituerit, quod liber tuus plenius est locutus, in episcopatu uero, quod praetermisisse te mirror, unum tantummodo suscitavit."

made earlier in the dialogue. The term Gallus uses marks him as a *rusticus*—humble in speech as Martin was humble in life—and also sets him in opposition to the *scholastici* with whom he is discoursing, learned men who would instead use the Greek term, *tripodas*. Gallus' digression, however, as well as Martin's repose, is interrupted by the beggar bursting into the bishop's chambers: he has yet to be clothed by the deacon. Martin immediately gives him his tunic and sends the beggar away. At this point, the deacon returns, not knowing what has happened; Martin instructs him to obtain clothing for the beggar immediately. The deacon does so, buying from a nearby shop the absolutely cheapest possible garment. It is this humble tunic which Martin himself then wears.

The exemplary deed, here depicted as no less an act of humility than an act of charity, is conspicuously concealed by Martin. No witness is present. Indeed, the narrative makes clear that Martin goes out of his way to hide his deed. He keeps secret the fact that he gives the pauper his own cloak: “the holy man, while the other did not observe, secretly drew off his tunic, and told the pauper, now clothed, to depart.”¹⁰⁷ Likewise Martin hides from his deacon the fact that he wears the cheaply bought garment: “Martin, completely unmoved, tells him to stand just outside the doors, thus obtaining secrecy while in his nakedness he puts on the garment, striving with all his might to keep hidden what he had done.”¹⁰⁸ As in the previous examples, the text makes clear the explicit lack of primary eyewitness to such virtuous deeds. We are beginning to see perhaps a regular departure, then, from the exemplary schema which Roller has described. For, not only are these deeds inconspicuous, they are conspicuously so. Here, as elsewhere, the text seems to

¹⁰⁷ *G* 2.1.5, “sanctus paupere non uidente intra amphibalum sibi tunicam latenter eduxit pauperemque contextum discedere iubet.”

¹⁰⁸ *G* 2.1.9, “Ille, nihil motus, iubet eum paululum stare pro foribus, secretum utique procurans dum sibi uestem nudus inponeret, totis uiribus elaborans ut posset occultum esse quod fecerat.”

highlight the longed-for secrecy of the deed, a natural function of the very humility which is exemplified in the narrative.

However, this exemplary action is commemorated in the narrative just recounted. And as the story itself seems a marked rebuke to the impossibility of secrecy, so Gallus as narrator makes an aside which declares as much: “When do such things remain hidden in the holy men who so desire it? Willing or unwilling, all things are brought forth.”¹⁰⁹ The text itself is not, however, the only such commemoration. Another, somewhat more oblique monument to Martin’s humility is suggested therein. Having just put on the garment, Martin proceeds to give the mass.¹¹⁰ During that mass—when he was blessing the altar—Martin’s head was wreathed with a globe of flame. Here the text is explicit about the spectacular nature of the event. The emphasis is continually on the fact that this flame is seen. Indeed, *videre* is repeated four times in two sections. Martin’s exemplary deed is marked by a very visible, seemingly very public commemoration. And yet again, despite the spectacle, the primary witnesses to such a sight are limited: “Even though we saw this take place on a crowded day in the midst of a huge multitude of people, only one of the virgins, one of the priests and three of the monks saw it.”¹¹¹ The original deed—an act of charity and humility—accomplished in secret, and intentionally so, produces a public (and obviously miraculous) monument, but one which is decidedly temporary and whose audience is yet again limited. In this account, once more the essential audience is the

¹⁰⁹ *G* 2.1.9, “Sed quando in sanctis uiris latent ista quaerentibus? Velint nolint, cuncta produntur.”

¹¹⁰ The text is explicit that Martin wears the same garment (“cum hac . . . ueste”) and that the following event happens on the very same day.

¹¹¹ *G* 2.2.2, “Et licet celeberrimo factum die in magna populi multitudine uiderimus, una tantum de uirginibus et unus de presbyteris, tres tantum uidere de monachis. Ceteri cur non uiderint, non potest nostril esse iudicii.”

secondary one, a function of the narrative monument which Gallus produces within the dialogue and of the textual monument which Sulpicius—as author—produces with the dialogue.

What makes this particular *exemplum* so interesting, however, is the way it repeats and re-inscribes what is perhaps the most memorable and certainly the most commemorated scene in the *Life of Martin*.¹¹² Here in the *Gallus*, Martin gives up his cloak to a beggar. In the *Life*, he divided his cloak in two to give to a beggar. Just as this account is meant to invoke imitation in its auditors and in its readers, so too is it a repetition itself. Martin imitates his own prior act of charity. Roller might say that “he initiates and terminates his own exemplary loop”.¹¹³ That loop, however, is a good deal more expansive. The account in the *Gallus* looks back on the *Life*; but that earlier account is itself mimetic. For in the *Life*, Martin’s act of charity repeats itself. Martin first clothes the beggar, but the next night it is revealed in a dream that he has also clothed Christ:

Therefore on the following night, when Martin had given himself to sleep, he saw Christ clothed in that part of his cloak with which he had covered the poor man. He contemplated the Lord most diligently, and was ordered to acknowledge the robe which he had given. Soon he heard Jesus saying in a clear voice to the multitude of angels standing round: "Martin, still but a catechumen, covered me with this robe." The Lord, truly mindful of his words—who had previously said: "Inasmuch as you have done these things to one of the least of these, you have done them for me"—professed that he himself had been clothed in that poor man;

¹¹² See especially, Sharon Farmer, *Communities of Saint Martin: Legend and Ritual in Medieval Tours* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991).

¹¹³ Roller, "Exemplarity," 16.

and to confirm the testimony of so good a deed, he deigned to show himself in that very garb which the poor man had received.¹¹⁴

Martin's apparently original exemplary deed is in fact modeled on a gospel passage. "I was naked and you covered me (Mt 25:36) . . . Inasmuch as ye have done these things to one of the least of these, ye have done them unto me (Mt 25:40)." Martin's deed clearly looks back on biblical precedents. So too does it look forward to a number of potential imitators. We have seen just how Martin's humility—an essential aspect of the deed recounted in the dialogue—is constructed as inspiration for Gallus' rhetorical undertakings. Likewise, Martin's giving up his cloak augurs one of the *verba familiaria*—sayings of the holy man—which Gallus recounts later in the dialogue. In that brief collection, the very first describes a recently shorn sheep. Gallus reports Martin as saying, "She has fulfilled the gospel precept: she had two cloaks, and one of them she has given to him who had none. So too you ought to do."¹¹⁵ Here the value of imitation is made explicit. The sheep's charity, which seems to repeat Martin's own, is regarded a worthy object of exemplary imitation. Gallus' account of a Martinian act of charity, then, is a dense complex of exemplary relations, a series of allusions which function within the narrative and outside it and which likewise reveal a number of possible textual referents, Martinian and otherwise.

¹¹⁴ *VM*, 3.3-4, "Nocte igitur insecuta, cum se sopori dedisset, uidit Christum chlamydis suae, qua pauperem texerat, parte uestitum. Intueri diligentissime Dominum uestemque, quam dederat, iubetur agnoscere. Mox ad angelorum circumstantium multitudinem audit Iesum clare uoce dicentem: Martinus adhuc catechumenus hac me ueste contextit. Vere memor Dominus dictorum suorum, qui ante praedixerat: quamdiu fecistis uni ex minimis istis, mihi fecistis, se in paupere professus est fuisse uestitum; et ad confirmandum tam boni operis testimonium in eodem se habitu, quem pauper acceperat, est dignatus ostendere."

¹¹⁵ *G* 2.10.2, "Euangelicum, inquit, mandatum ista conpleuit: duas habuit tunicas, unam earum largita est non habenti. Ita ergo et uos facere debetis."

In this way, Martin becomes his own *exemplum*. Indeed, Gallus' speech—not just in this account of the beggar, but also in those that follow immediately thereafter—comes to resemble the *Life*, reveals itself, that is, to be a sort of reproduction or reiteration of that earlier text. But, it is no mere reproduction. Rather, this repetition is fundamental to the exemplary discourse according to which the text functions. The *Gallus* enacts even at the level of composition those exemplary qualities which give the text its ethical content. Imitation of form reinforces the text's imitative function. That is to say, exemplarity here has both ethical and literary dimensions. Or rather, the literary choices inherent to writing this text are re-valued along ethical lines.

Therefore, despite Gallus' insistence on avoiding repetition (1.27.7), those exemplary deeds which he recounts in his speech themselves turn out to be iterative in nature. I would suggest, in fact, that the section of *perpetua oratio* with which Gallus begins his account forms a neat unit which reprises in condensed form the most memorable events of the *Life*. In the dialogue, Martin's past deeds—those already described in that earlier text—come to be re-inscribed in the present and re-valued by their role in the construction of an exemplary discourse centered on Martin himself. We have already seen that such repetition is a fundamental aspect of exemplarity in Roman literature, whereby one example quite naturally begets another. Imitation, in Sulpicius as in so many ancient texts, is essential to the performance of virtue. What makes this section of the *Gallus* so compelling is the fact that Martin functions as a model for himself: he clothes a beggar, he heals the sick, he resurrects the dead, each act pre-figured by—even commemorative of—a famous story from the *Life*.

The miracle cures effected by Martin at *G* 2.2—in their content and in their language — look back to *VM* 16, where Martin in Trier heals a paralytic girl. The second of the cures recounted by Gallus forms a particularly close parallel with that passage from the *Vita*: the

repetition of surrexit is particularly striking. By employing this language of resurrection in both passages, Sulpicius sets Martin in a typology of exemplary holy men which includes Elisha, who resurrects the Shunamite's son and cures Naaman of his leprosy (2 Kings 4-5);¹¹⁶ the apostles, who are given the gift of healing (1 Cor 12:28); and, of course, Christ, whose cure of the paralytic (Mt 9:7) is described in terms identical to the Martinian texts (esp. surrexit). Again we are witness to the iterative nature of this exemplary discourse: Martin, whose cure is described in the Gallus, is but one in a line of models, a line which so happens to include himself. As I said, Martin is his own *exemplum*.

Fontaine adduces this very fact, and goes to some length to explain the repetition, in order to demonstrate that the episode ought not be considered “une pure scène de genre.”¹¹⁷ He writes, “Certes, il existe un parallèle curieux entre les deux chapitres de Vita 16 et Dialogues 2,2. Mais il est, en fait, dans la structure des récits plutôt que dans leur contenu. Il est plus naturel de l’attribuer à la technique littéraire de Sulpice, et de l’expliquer par le souci de relier les Dialogues à la Vita déjà écrite. La manière en est analogue, non la matière.”¹¹⁸ Fontaine is naturally quite right here. Sulpicius does make an effort to connect the Gallus to the previously written Vita. But, in light of our analysis here, we can begin to see what fundamental purpose such a carefully constructed analogy might serve. We need not attempt to diminish the parallels. The exemplary (and therefore iterative) quality of this deed is the very point. Martin heals, just as he has healed in the past; just as the apostles and the prophets have healed; just as Christ has

¹¹⁶ On Sulpicius' particular use of *Kings*, see Jacques Fontaine, “Une clé littéraire de la *Vita Martini* de Sulpice Sévère: La typologie prophétique,” in *Mélanges offerts à Christine Mohrmann* (Utrecht: Spectrum Éditeurs, 1963), 84-95.

¹¹⁷ Fontaine, *Vie*, 830.

¹¹⁸ *idem*, 830.

healed. By disregarding those concerns for authenticity which motivate Fontaine, we are able to see more clearly the discursive qualities of the Gallus. At its foundation, this is a text about the problems and possibilities of imitation. The doubling effected here is consistent with just such an interpretation.

The act of exemplary reading assumes an imitative impulse, and Martin is regularly evaluated in this context. He is a man who seemingly ought to be imitated. And though Martin's particularly trans-human or Christ-like qualities render him inimitable, nevertheless I would suggest that by attending to the multiple interpretive contexts afforded by this "endless loop of social reproduction",¹¹⁹ we might begin to see the ethical potential even of such obviously miraculous deeds. For the resurrection story in the *Life* is wondrous not only for Martin's miracle cure. Perhaps equally noteworthy are the virtues of humility and of obedience which the holy man displays in this episode. Martin's *uirtus* manifests in inimitable *uirtutes*. Though the miraculous powers cannot be reproduced by the reader, nevertheless the extreme humility which occasions them is however a suitable object of imitation. In the resurrection scene from the *Vita*, Martin first denies his powers, claims that "he is not worthy to be the one through whom the Lord displays a sign of his power."¹²⁰ Then, it is only when compelled by the gathered bishops, that he actually effects a cure.¹²¹ So also, the story of Elisha and Naaman from 2 Kings is a parable of humility, in which Naaman must overcome his pride in order to be cured by the prophet. Though the value of humility is not directly expressed in Gallus' account of Martin's

¹¹⁹ Roller, "Exemplarity," 6.

¹²⁰ *VM* 16.5, "non esse se dignum per quem Dominus signum uirtutis ostenderet."

¹²¹ *VM* 16.6, "a circumstantibus episcopis ire compulsus."

cures, nevertheless these exemplary models in a rather subtle manner allow the theme begun earlier to continue here.

We witness something similar in following chapters of the Gallus, which despite their miraculous content seem also to model humility as an exemplary virtue. The account in G 2.3 is explicitly a testament to Martin's power over beasts (a common enough miracle both in these dialogues and in other narratives of ascetic virtue in late antiquity). But, it is also a demonstration of the holy man's humility. For, here he receives a violent beating without a single protestation, "in silence and with incredible patience."¹²² All he needed to do was reveal his identity, and surely the soldiers would have stopped; this much is revealed by their subsequent reaction. As it is, the account recalls the *Apophthegmata Patrum* on humility, where more than once a monk receives an unjust beating in silence.¹²³ Even the following passage, in which Martin resurrects a boy and converts an entire town to Christianity is prefaced by a long digression on Martin's ability to shun boastfulness (*iactantia*):¹²⁴ "Certainly many of his earlier achievements were known to the world and could not be hid, but those are said to be innumerable which, while he avoided boastfulness, he kept concealed and did not allow to come to the knowledge of mankind."¹²⁵ This section therefore continues the refrain of humility, which has persisted since Gallus began his speech at G 1.27 and which was pre-figured by the *exempla* recounted by

¹²² G 2.3.4, *mutus et incredibili patientia*.

¹²³ Macarius 1 (*PG* 65:257D-260B), Nikon 1 (*PG* 65:309A-C), Nesterius 2 (*PG* 65:305D-308A)

¹²⁴ *iactantia* naturally is associated with *vanitas* and with *falsa iustitia* (the explicit targets of the *exempla* recounted by Postumianus at 1.18-22), but G 1.25.4 links them explicitly. These earlier passages (which demonstrate obedience and its opposing vices) are the origin of the exemplary loop we have been discussing in this section.

¹²⁵ G 2.4.2, "Multa quidem illius prius gesta innotuere mundo neque potuere celari, sed innumerabilia esse dicuntur quae, dum iactantiam uitat, occuluit neque in hominum notitiam passus est peruenire."

Postumianus at 1.18-22. Indeed, *iactantia* shares a semantic association with *uanitas* and with *falsa iustitia*—the explicit targets of those four *exempla* with which Postumianus concludes his narrative—but the text also links these notions explicitly.¹²⁶

So, here in Gallus' narrative, the text recovers a theme introduced first by Postumianus, and indeed a theme which we have already traced through that exceptional passage at 1.27 where Gallus makes his *captatio benevolentiae*. Humility—though never so named, and defined instead by its opposing vices—becomes a motivating virtue in the context of Gallus' initial account of Martin's exemplary deeds, defining the essential content of the saint's actions and also the literary form in which his hagiographer represents it. For, Gallus calls on Martin as an *exemplum* not in ascetic practice nor in the performance of miracles, but rather in the production of literature, specifically the writing of hagiography. "If you grant that I am a disciple of Martin, allow me this as well, that by his example I might be permitted to shun the vain trappings of speech and ornaments of words."¹²⁷ Here then is the only positively valued and successfully accomplished imitation of Martin represented in the entire dialogue. It is an imitation of form rather than content, and it consists essentially in literary practice.

Perpetual Discourse and the Possibility of Ascetic Community in Gaul

The successful imitation of Martin, with which Gallus begins his narrative makes a stark contrast to the dialogue's conclusion, marked as it is by the lamentable failure of the text's so carefully

¹²⁶ G 1.25.4, "Iam uero aduersus uanitatem atque iactantiam."

¹²⁷ G 1.27.3, "Nam si mihi tribuistis Martini me esse discipulum, illud etiam concedite, ut mihi liceat exemplo illius inanes sermonum faleras et uerborum ornamenta contemnere."

constructed exemplary schema. Here in the text's final section, Sulpicius is addressing Postumianus, enjoining him to make one extra stop on his next journey to the East. The primary aim of Postumianus' renewed travel will be to spread once more stories of Martin, that is, explicitly to bear the text we readers have in our hands out into the world.¹²⁸ But, Sulpicius adds one further goal: the shores of Ptolemais, where a certain Pomponius is buried.

And you will say to him, but not roughly and not harshly—rather with the words of one who sympathizes and not with the tone of one who reproaches—that if only he had listened to you that one time and me constantly and had been willing to imitate Martin rather than that man whom I am unwilling to name, he would never have been so cruelly separated from me, nor covered by a heap of unknown dust, having suffered death in the midst of the sea with the lot of a ship-wrecked pirate and with difficulty securing burial on a far-distant shore.¹²⁹

Pomponius' failure is characterized as one of exemplarity. He chose the wrong model, spurning Martin in favor of a lesser *exemplum*. His fate therefore is death at sea and burial at distant remove from his homeland; more troubling yet, he has lost community, is separated not only from his home but also from Sulpicius (and from this particular gathering of Martinian monks). By refusing the discourse which Sulpicius constructs, a discourse centered on Martin and his exemplary *uirtus*, Pomponius likewise abandons the promise of salvation inherent to that particular type of *sermo*.

¹²⁸ G 3.17.2, "Ista interim de illo uiro portabis Orienti, et dum recurris diuersasque oras, loca, portus, insulas urbesque praeterlegis, Martini nomen et gloriam sparge per populos."

¹²⁹ G 3.18.2-3, "Dices tamen illi, sed non aspere, non acerbe, conpatientis alloquio, non exprobandis elogio. Quod si uel te quondam uel me semper audire uoluisset, et Martinum magis quam illum quem nominare nolo fuisset imitates, numquam, a me tam crudeliter disparatus, ignoti pulueris syrte tegetetur, naufragi sorte praedonis passus in medio mari mortem, et uix in extreme nactus litore sepulturam."

I have previously argued that the *Gallus* creates the conditions for an ostensibly salvific literary practice.¹³⁰ It constructs a potentially endless narrative about Martin, characterized by an episodic structure lacking any obvious *telos* or goal. The result is a narrative bounded only by external constraints. “There can be no limit when speaking about Martin.”¹³¹ The text figures such discussion as the means of salvation for its participants. And indeed, the text seems to continue in that vein as the end of the dialogue approaches on the second day, perhaps even more strongly so. Postumianus will travel east bearing word of Martin: “You will convey to the East the things you have now heard about that famous man; and as you retrace your steps to your former haunts, and pass along by various coasts, places, harbors, islands, and seas, see that you spread among the people the name and glory of Martin.”¹³² Postumianus will reach Campania and Rome, then travel all through Italy and Illyria, to Africa and its Carthage, to Greece and its Corinth and Athens, all the way to Egypt with its many saints. At each stop, Postumianus will occasion discourse on Martin, and so the construction of perpetual discourse centered on “the name and glory of Martin” seems well complete. The holy man will engender an exemplary loop which will continue without end as Postumianus repeats his journey to the east, bearing Martin with him instead of bearing back stories of monks in the eastern deserts.

What is striking, however, is the decidedly final sense that the mention of Pomponius conveys. The text ends: “We grieved over these things in an especially mournful voice, and while the tears of everyone were drawn out by our laments, with great admiration of Martin but no less

¹³⁰ See above, Chapter I.

¹³¹ *G* 3.17.1, “De Martino autem expectare non debes ut ulla sit meta referenti.”

¹³² *G* 3.17.2, “Ista interim de illo uiro portabis Orienti, et dum recurris diuersasque oras, loca, portus, insulas urbesque praeterlegis, Martini nomen et gloriam sparge per populos.”

sorrow from our weeping, we scattered.”¹³³ The *discessum est* is a pleasing parallel to the *conuenissemus* with which the dialogue began;¹³⁴ at the same time, however, the departure is definitive, even troubling. Of course, the *Gallus* is in many ways a hopeful text, in that it proposes (and itself performs) a literary practice centered on exemplary reading, a practice whose primary aim is salvation whether through identification with Martin or through the intercession of Martin. But, if the lament here at 3.18 is sincere, the *discessus* is revealing. It marks first of all a real dispersal of the community so recently gathered to hear and tell of Martin. It does not necessarily signal the final end of Martinian discourse: this conversation has produced a great deal of material for Postumianus to convey eastward, thereby perpetuating the exemplary loop constructed around Martin’s *uirtus*.

The end, however, remains in other ways all too real. We do not travel with Postumianus once more to the East, do not hear the discourse which Martin and Martinian narratives engender. We remain in Gaul, at Primuliacum, where the conversation has reached its definitive end. The now complete biography of Martin ends not with the saint’s death, but with the death of a wayward disciple, one who refused the possibilities of exemplary discourse. It likewise ends with the possibility of community precluded, at least in the narrative world of the text. The gathered monks depart.

Here we move into the realm of speculation: we have seen that the *Gallus* constructs a discursive reality, in which salvation can be achieved through literary practice, but then its final passage seems to suggest—if only as a hint—that these literary monuments are the only real

¹³³ *G* 3.18.5, “Haec cum maxime flebili uoce gemeremus, omnium lacrimis per nostra lamenta commotis, cum magna quidem Martini admiration, sed non minore ex nostris fletibus dolore discessum est.”

¹³⁴ *G* 1.1.1, “Cum in unum locum ego et Gallus conuenissemus”.

possibility that remains. The community of monks at Primuliacum departs. Is it for the last time? Could we go so far as to say that Sulpicius constructs this discursive practice because literature is now his only recourse? We hear Sulpicius often lamenting the fact that the community of Martinians is especially beleaguered in Gaul.¹³⁵ Indeed, despite the persistent popularity of cultic practice centered on Martin through the entire breadth of the middle ages, there is some evidence to suggest that the cult consists not so much in continuous and centralized devotional practice, but rather in diverse, localized reinventions.¹³⁶ It is tempting to speculate that Sulpicius writes this ascetic practice of eulogizing Martin because the communal practice of asceticism is no longer a possibility for him. And so, the literary remembrance of the saint becomes quite a bit more than that. The practice of literature, of reading and of writing, may well be for Sulpicius the only means of practicing Martinian asceticism, the only means of participating in his saintly *uirtus*.

¹³⁵ *cf.* the story of Brice, Martin's successor in the episcopal see at Tours, *G* 3.15.

¹³⁶ Farmer, *Communities of Saint Martin*, gives an account of the competing interests which mark the cult of Martin at Tours later in its development. For a study which focuses on Martin's cult in the period immediately following his death, see A.S. McKinley, "The First Two Centuries of Saint Martin of Tours," *Early Medieval Europe* 14.2 (2006): 173-200. Also, see above n. 15.

Conclusion

The *Gallus* ends with Sulpicius, as interlocutor, imagining the reception of this text in the far distant lands to which he expects Postumianus will travel, in an effort spread the *nomen et gloria Martini*. In a comment that subtly elides the distinction between oral conversation—still ongoing in the narrative world of the *Gallus*—and the literary dialogue presented to external readers, the interlocutor Sulpicius characterizes their discourse in the language of writing, instructing his friend to “unroll the volume of our speech.”¹ This elision allows Sulpicius, as an author speaking through his eponymous interlocutor, the opportunity for metatextual commentary, allows him quite explicitly to consider the potential reception of his work. As Postumianus returns eastward, he will bear with him a record of their conversation. Sulpicius frames this textual monument to Martin in terms of earlier “classics”;² he situates Martin in a competitive framework that sets the holy man’s deeds in a long tradition of virtuous action. Postumianus’ easterly journey will take him to Italy, where Paulinus will not refuse to compare Martin to his Felix.³ It will take him to Africa, whose people will venerate not only Cyprian, who consecrated the city of Carthage by

¹ *G* 3.17.3, “primum sermonis nostri, quod uel hesterno confecimus uel hodie diximus uolumen euolue.” Fontaine, *Gallus*, 358 n.1, glosses the phrase, explaining that “sermonis nostri uolumen” refers to “une copie complète du dialogue.” Of course, this is what Sulpicius alludes to, but the simple equation of speech to text ignores the complex movements of production and reception that are somehow collapsed in Sulpicius’ metatextual remark. The interlocutors—as Sulpicius the author represents them—are highly aware of their participation in a written, textual production. *Cf.* also *Gallus*’ earlier remark that the text is arranged in the “form of a dialogue,” *G* 3.5.6, “speciem dialogi.”

² See above, nn-nn.

³ *G* 3.17.5, “Ille, Martini non inuidus, gloriarum sanctarumque in Christo uirtutum piissimus aestimator, non abnuet praesulem nostrum cum suo Felice componere.”

the blood he spilled as a martyr, but Martin also.⁴ It will take Postumianus—if he veers just a little out of his way—to Greece, where he might remind the people that Plato was no wiser, Socrates no braver than Martin.⁵ Nor did Paul's preaching at Corinth mean that Christ has forsaken Gaul, because the latter can claim Martin as its own.⁶ Postumianus will finally return to Egypt, which—though justly proud of its *sancti*—will recognize that Europe, on account of Martin, will not yield to its *uirtus*.⁷

We have already seen the extent to which Martin participates in the exemplary framework that Sulpicius constructs. But the comparison and competition apparent in this passage makes clear that the holy man does not simply mimic the great deeds of the past. He engages in a sort of rivalry to manifest *uirtus*. Naturally, Martin surpasses his competition. By the same token, Sulpicius himself enters into a sort of rivalry, demonstrating his creative power as author to do more than simply repeat the literary productions of the past. Just as Sulpicius began this literary cycle—in the *Life of Martin*—by setting the saint's deeds against those of Hector and Socrates and by comparing his own task as author to that of Homer or Plato, so here Sulpicius ends by making clear the extent to which Martin surpasses his exemplary precursors.⁸

⁴ G 3.17.5, "licet iam, prout ipse dixisti, uirum nouerit, tamen nunc praecipue de oe plura cognoscat, ne solum ibi Cyprianum martyrem suum, quamuis sancto illius sanguine consecrata, miretur."

⁵ G 3.17.6, "Iam si ad laeuam Achaiae sinum paululum deuexus intraueris, sciat Corinthus, sciant Athenae non sapientiore in Academia Platonem nec Socraten in carcere fortiolem."

⁶ G 3.17.6, "Felicem quidem Graeciam, quae meruit audire Apostolum praedicantem, sed nequaquam a Christo Gallias derelictas, quibus donauerit habere Martinum."

⁷ G 3.17.7, "Cum uero ad Aegyptum usque perueneris, quamquam illa suorum sanctorum numero sit et uirtutibus superba, tamen non dedignetur audire quam illi uel uniuersae Asiae in solo Martino Europa non cesserit."

⁸ VM 1.3, "Quid enim aut ipsis occasura cum saeculo scriptorum suorum gloria profuit? aut quid posteritas emoluenti tulit legendo Hectorem pugnantem aut Socraten philosophantem, cum eos non solum

He reminds his readers that he and they have done a thing well worth the effort, just as he had predicted in the very first chapter of the *Life*: "I think I will accomplish something worthwhile, if I write out the life of a most holy man, to be a future example to others, through whom my readers no doubt will be roused to true wisdom, heavenly combat and divine virtue."⁹ Sulpicius finally brings closure to his Martinian corpus by situating his subject and his broader literary project against the backdrop of earlier models. By that comparison, he demonstrates the value that inheres to writing and reading about Martin.

In this dissertation, I have tried to show that Sulpicius is an author deeply conscious of and deeply engaged with the classical literary past. This manifests most clearly in his persistent use of a rhetoric of exemplarity in the *Gallus*, but finds expression also in the formal and structural features of his writing. Sulpicius writes in such a way as to highlight his relationship to past authors while simultaneously demonstrating the extent of his literary innovation. Though he persists in claiming for himself an extreme literary humility, Sulpicius nevertheless endeavors to show the value that can be derived from literature, both its production and consumption. He even subtly equates the task of the writer with the virtue of his saintly subject, showing how authorship can obtain a salvific quality. In the *Gallus*, Sulpicius in fact makes clear how a program of reading founded on exemplary imitation might in fact compel further literary production. Sulpicius refigures the relationship between an author, his audience and his saintly

imitari stultitia est, sed non acerrime etiam inugnare dementia." Also, *VM* 1.5, "Qui quidem error humanus litteris traditus in tantum ualuit, ut multos plane aemulos uel inanis philosophiae uel stultae illius uirtutis inuenerit."

⁹ *VM* 1.6, "Vnde facturus mihi operae pretium uideor, si uitam sanctissimi uiri, exemplo aliis mox futuram, perscripsero, quo utique ad ueram sapientiam et caelestem militiam diuinamque uirtutem legentes incitabuntur."

subject: Sulpicius fashions a link which correlates writing and reading to the performance of virtue.

In the final judgment, however, I think the most important contribution of this study is a good deal more simple: there should now be little doubt that the *Gallus* is no unnecessary or derivative supplement to Sulpicius' earlier *Life of Martin*. It is rather the culmination of an ambitious and inventive literary project comprising multiple texts and genres. Indeed, as much as Sulpicius is an author heavily influenced by literary tradition, he also makes a series of compelling formal innovations at a time of increasing literary experimentation. Though he situates that innovation within a recognizably classical framework,¹⁰ nevertheless this multi-volume narrative describing Martin's life and virtues lacks any obvious contemporary comparandum. Sulpicius proffers a novel way to do biography, whether Christian or otherwise. I would suggest that such aesthetic considerations merit further study in the literature of the later Roman empire. Late ancient poetry has, at least since the influential work of Michael Roberts, more often been the subject of literary critical interpretation. I think this dissertation demonstrates why we might profitably consider the prose literature of the period along similar lines.¹¹

¹⁰ Marco Formisano, "Towards an Aesthetic Paradigm of Late Antiquity," *Antiquité Tardive* 15 (2007): 277-84 has identified this engagement with the classical past as one potential feature of a broader late ancient aesthetic, adopting Marrou's notion of *pseudomorphosis* as explanatory of the tendency in late ancient literature to couch innovation in tradition. See also, H.I. Marrou, *Décadence romaine ou antiquité tardive?* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1977).

¹¹ Michael Roberts, *The Jeweled Style: Poetry and Poetics in Late Antiquity* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989). Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire*, is also foundational in this regard, though here rhetorical study is done primarily in service of intellectual history. Formisano, "Towards an Aesthetic Paradigm" is an evocative recent attempt at defining a late ancient literary aesthetic. The work of Jacques Fontaine, highly influential in this study, also deserves mention in this respect. Fontaine, "Sulpice Sévère et l'esthétique de la prose théodosienne," highlights the apparent tendency towards mixture and eclecticism in late ancient literature, on which see above 96-97. See also,

I would therefore hope that there is value evident in my attention to such narrow, internal issues as narrative structure or the function of genre cues in the *Gallus*. I do think I have shown that these are problems important to Sulpicius himself and moreover that he attempts to offer meaningful answers in the progressive development of his corpus. At the very least, scholars will now need to consider the Martinian corpus as an organic whole. We have seen that the *Gallus* is the culmination of an innovative literary project, and therefore merits significantly more attention than it has received up to now. By explaining the scope of Sulpicius' project through its progression across literary genres, I was able to argue for the careful identification of form and content in the Martinian corpus. The dialogue form in particular should be seen to condition and likewise respond to a program of reading in Sulpicius' work, one founded on the mimetic impulses inherent to exemplary discourse. Finally, by delineating a poetics in the *Gallus* which figures the author and his readers as participants—by a series of exemplary impulses—in the *uirtus* of the holy man, I am able to show how Sulpicius links subject, author and audience in a salvific literary program. In such a framework, the methods of literary production, the formal and structural features of the text, naturally demand careful study.

Jacques Fontaine, "Unité et diversité du mélange des genres et des tons chez quelques écrivains latins de la fin du IV^e siècle: Ausone, Ambroise, Ammien," in *Christianisme et formes littéraires de l'Antiquité tardive en Occident*, ed. O. Reverdin (Geneva: Vandoeuvres, 1976), 425-72.

Appendix

IDENTIFYING THE *INTERMÈDES GAULOIS*

Fontaine identifies seven passages as *intermèdes gaulois*, but I would suggest that there are eight *intermèdes*. It seems clear that the passage at 2.7.1-2.8.4, apparently overlooked by Fontaine, functions as an *intermède* (and is in fact written as an intratextual parallel to the first *intermède* at 1.4.5). I suggest this slight redefinition only because it allows us to recognize that Sulpicius marks these sections as distinct from the narrative that surrounds it: each of these interruptions is clearly introduced by some explicit marker of direct speech, as outlined in the table below.

Intermèdes gaulois in the Gallus

<i>IG1</i>	1.4.5. Ad haec subridens ego ad Gallum meum: — "Quid, inquam , Galle, placetne prandium fasciculus herbarum et panis dimidius uiris quinque?"
<i>IG2</i>	1.8.4. "Nobis uero, Gallus inquit , nimium nimiumque conpertus est."
<i>IG3</i>	1.12.2. Ad haec Gallus me intuens: "O si uester ille—nolo nomen dicere—nunc adesset~ Vellem admodum istud audiret exemplum . . ."
<i>IG4</i>	1.21.1. "Tu uero, inquit Gallus meus , nescio quid Hieronymo reliqueris disputandum: ita breuiter uniuersa nostrorum instituta complexus es . . ."
<i>IG5</i>	1.24.1 "Equidem, Postumiane, inquam , cum te iam dudum de sanctorum uirtutibus intentus audierem . . ."
<i>IG6</i>	2.5.1. "Vicisti, inquit Postumianus , Galle, uicisti, non utique me, qui Martinum sum potius adsertor . . ."
<i>IG7</i>	2.7.1. Ad haec Postumianus: — "Iam dudum, inquit , Galle, audiens te loquentem, uehementer admiror reginae fidem."
<i>IG8</i>	3.16.1. Ad haec Postumianus: — "Audiat, inquit , istud exemplum noster iste de proximo."

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